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UNCONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE STRATEGY

by

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13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)

This thesis examines a largely unexplored area of deterrence theory – unconventional deterrence. Unconventional deterrence is defined herein as "persuading the opponent not to attack, via threats of unconventional warfare, such as guerrilla resistance and terrorism." It treats terrorism as a punishment strategy, through which the one deterring threatens to punish the aggressor's population. Guerrilla warfare is a denial strategy, through which the one deterring threatens to protract a war and deny the aggressor his political objectives. This study questions the underlying hypothesis of deterrence theory which says that the balance of the opponents' military capabilities is the basic determinant of successful deterrence. Rather, the hypothesis here is that the deterrer may deter the aggressor from attacking by adopting a strategy that makes the aggressor's military superiority irrelevant. The present thesis focuses primarily on relatively weak states. Unconventional deterrence is explored as a means for a weaker state to deter a considerably stronger opponent.

This thesis discusses the requirements for successful deterrence, and the peculiarities of unconventional deterrence. As well, the dynamics of small wars are explored in order to unfold a paradoxical phenomenon: the possibility of an underdog's victory in war. Two case studies: (1) the Vietnam War of 1964-73 and (2) the Afghanistan War of 1979-89 – are explored as examples of the weak denying the strong their objectives.

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UNCONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE STRATEGY

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I.   INTRODUCTION

> Held captive by the accepted strategic framework, time and time again the losers explained away their defeat by citing mitigating factors.
>
> Martin van Creveld, *Transformation of War*

A.   BACKGROUND

Unconventional warfare is not a new phenomenon in history. As in the biblical conflict between David and Goliath, guerrilla warfare has showed its potential throughout history; from Fabians and Spaniard guerrillas' fighting successfully against Hannibal, and later, Napoleon, throughout the colonial wars of the 20th century, to the driving out of both Cold War superpowers, as in Vietnam and Afghanistan. The current conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well, exemplify the difficulties that can be created for an overwhelmingly dominant antagonist in fighting against resistance of this kind. Likewise, the Russians have encountered similar difficulties in Chechnya.

It is generally agreed by military strategist and theoreticians that guerrilla warfare is a weapon of the weak. Ever since Mao, who first explicitly transformed guerrilla warfare from being merely a tactical approach, to being a full-blown strategy, guerrilla warfare has been considered as an underdog's weapon of necessity, rather than choice - "defeat is invariable outcome where native forces fight with inferior weapons against modernized forces on the latter's terms" (as cited in Mack, 1983, p. 176). In other words, Mao suggests that, to avoid being crushed, the weak must refuse to wage a war that plays to the strengths of the superior enemy.

This rule has been proven repeatedly during the 20th century. Compare, for example, the outcomes of the Gulf War of 1991, in which the underdog chose to wage a conventional war of attrition and maneuver, playing to the opponent's strengths, with the Vietnam War, where the underdog refused to fight on the terms of a superior enemy, adopting a low-intensity guerrilla warfare method, instead. However, guerrilla warfare has remained more accepted by sub-state groups (mostly for insurrectionary purposes) than it has by weak states. In contrast to sub-states actors, small states have not treated guerrilla warfare as a way to balance their inherent military weaknesses, vis-à-vis

stronger opponents, especially in defensive wars. Guerrilla warfare has been either an ancillary function, if any, of main conventional forces, or has been believed to arise, spontaneously, out of the common populous, as a response to the enemy's occupation. For instance, Hans von Dach's *Total Resistance* (which, in fact, is a guerrilla handbook for the Swiss society and military) clearly appreciates the potential of guerrilla resistance. However, Dach advises what to do, only after conventional troops have been overrun. In other words, Dach suggests that guerrilla warfare is not supposed to replace conventional resistance.

The current war in Iraq, as well, seems to fit into the pattern above discussed. Although the Iraqi forces were crushingly defeated on the battlefields, as of late, coalition forces have been facing a seemingly insurmountable insurgency. On the other hand, speculations have been made that Saddam Hussein may have learned the lessons from the first Gulf War and, subsequently, concentrated his war efforts on strategies for engaging the opposition in guerrilla warfare.[1] Although there is not enough evidence to confirm this, using John Keegan's (2004) words, the "mysteriousness" of the war, such as, melting the most loyal and best equipped troops in the battlefields; having no fierce resistance in Baghdad, etc., suggests that this might be a reasonable assumption. Huge caches of weapons being found by coalition forces, along with ammunition, and US dollars, also suggests that the ongoing insurgency may not be an *ad hoc* popular uprising. However, even though Saddam Hussein may have carefully preplanned and prepared for the guerrilla war, he, definitely, did not try to deter his opponents by using this kind of warfare. Would such an attempt have been reasonable? Because of the US Administration apparently made every effort to reassure their own public that the war would not be a Vietnam-type "quagmire" (i.e., that the war in Iraq would be short and decisive), such deterrence, via unconventional war tactics, would have been logical. Overall, deterrence is the first line of defense (Joseph, 2001, p. 53).

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[1] For example, Herbert E. Meyer (2004) thinks, "the CIA failed to project Saddam Hussein's war strategy - to melt into the population and then launch guerrilla attacks rather than fight our army head-on in the field."

It is interesting to note that not all of these ideas, namely both fighting unconventionally and deterring by it, are new. Indeed, the idea of asymmetric warfare usually includes guerrilla resistance and terrorism, and has been circulating among strategists, who have tried to predict the future challenges for the US, since the end of the first Gulf War (Mahnken 1993; Allan, 1994; Pfaltzgraff and Wright, 2000). However, guerrilla warfare, as a strategy, (as well as a way for the weak to deter the strong) remains an area that is entirely ignored by deterrence theoreticians. Thus, the underlying hypothesis of deterrence theory remains based on military balance, i.e., that "shifts in the military balance in favor of the defender will make challenges less likely, whereas shifts in the military balance in favor of the challenger will make challenge more likely" (Russet, 1994, p. 41). Although this hypothesis has been challenged in theoretical debates many times (however, mainly based on misperception problems), and the argumentation that balance of interests, or motivations, is important has been established by several authors (e.g., Morgan, 2003, p. 164; Freedman, 2004, p. 47), the concept of military balance remains as the core of deterrence theory.

John J. Mearsheimer (1983) and Paul K. Huth (1988) have made the argument that aggressors do not like long wars. Such authors appear to challenge the concept of the overriding importance of military balance in their works. However, both come back to drawing similar conclusions, namely that military balance is an important determinant of a given deterrence's success of failure. Mearsheimer (1983) starts his analysis by arguing that the most important determinant is military strategies of antagonists. If an opponent is precluded from pursuing an option to achieve a quick and decisive victory, it is most likely that deterrence will succeed, because aggressors usually do not like long wars of attrition – the reasoning is that such wars are too costly, and unpredictable. However, Mearsheimer explicitly leaves guerrilla warfare as a strategy beyond his considerations, and his overall conclusion is that military balance is, indeed, important. In other words, for as long as forces that are available for each side shows a great disparity, the strategy of the weaker of the two sides is irrelevant. Deterrence will not work if the aggressor is able literally to overwhelm the defender. Huth (1988; 1999) found that local military balance is more relevant to the success of a deterrence than is overall strategic balance. That is to say, the defender's military capabilities in repulsing an attack from the very

beginning play an important role in determining deterrence outcomes, because attackers generally do not like prolonged wars of attrition. Similar to earlier studies, Huth also does not look beyond the common argumentation, i.e., that large military capability is the only way to threaten the aggressor with prolonged war.

Therefore, this study seeks answers to the following questions: "What if the defender promises a protracted war by guerrilla resistance, instead of repulsing the large-scale attack?"; "What if the defender threatens to deny the aggressor of his political objectives, instead of defeating the aggressor's forces on the battlefield?"; "What if the defender threatens to engage the aggressor in an endless, un-winnable fight?"; "What if the defender boosts his denial element with the threats of terrorist strikes on the challenger's regime, population, and/or economic structures?"; "What if the defender's strategy is to make the aggressors military superiority irrelevant?" In other words, "Can the stronger opponent be deterred by such unconventional threats as guerrilla warfare and terrorism?"

B.   SCOPE

1.   Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to examine and discuss unconventional deterrence, and thereby, to broaden the deterrence debate, while helping to fill gaps in deterrence theory. The main research question is whether a strategy of unconventional deterrence employed by relatively weak states can deter greater powers from their aggression. Supporting research questions are as follows:

- How should unconventional deterrence be defined?
- What are the conditions for successful deterrence?
- Are there dynamics and/or determinant factors that are unique to small wars?
- Can a small state create the conditions for successful deterrence using unconventional warfare to deter larger states?

2.   General Framework

This study does not intend to reformulate deterrence theory, or solve the internal deterrence debates. In fact, deterrence theory is too complex to be covered in detail in a study such as this. Thus, this study accepts current deterrence theory, with all of its major

weaknesses, inherent theoretical inconsistencies, and practical unreliability.[2] As Patrick M. Morgan (2003) concludes, "deterrence came to be a central component of our security so it continues to be very important to understand it and practice it as best as we can. But understanding it means facing up to the fact that it is inherently imperfect. It does not consistently work, and we cannot manipulate it sufficiently to fix that and make it a completely reliable tool of statecraft" (p. 285).

In addition, two other ideas need to be mentioned that are currently circulating in academic papers. Although a full discussion of these ideas is beyond the scope of this study, both are significant to the broad framework presented here:

- The nature of modern war is changing. Low-intensity conflicts, or "fourth generation warfare", have become a common area of analysis by today's strategic thinkers. In a seminal work on this topic, *The Transformation of War,* Martin van Creveld (1991) predicts the spread of low-intensity conflict, and demise of conventional war. Although not many scholars and strategists are as provocative as van Creveld who remarked, "war will not be waged by armies but by groups whom we today call terrorists, guerrillas, bandits and robbers" (1991, p. 197), undoubtedly, there exists a broad consensus that asymmetric warfare will likely dominate the scene of future conflicts.[3]

- The process of globalization has tended to be advantageous for the weaker actors. According to Audrey Kurth Cronin (2002), the use of information technologies, easier movement across international boundaries, and less restricted flows of financial resources, strengthen terrorists groups, while making developed countries more vulnerable (pp. 38-41). In addition, the development of, and ease of access to, technologies have enabled small organizations to gain more and more destructive and disruptive power. Although the majority of scholars worry about terrorist organizations, it seems reasonable to argue that the processes of globalization and technological development can, and will, be exploited by weak states, as well.

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[2] See Morgan (2003) for a comprehensive review of deterrence theory: Chapter 2 restates major theoretical weaknesses; Chapter 4 describes the difficulties of deterrence studies, elusiveness of the variables that control deterrence success or failure, and limitations of deterrence in practice. See also Colin S. Gray's (2003) shortlist, summarizing why deterrence today is "in a condition of crisis" (pp. 17-25).

[3] See for example Mahnken (1993), Pfaltzgraff and Wright (2000), Wilson et al (2001), and Hammes (2004).

3. Limitations

a. *Deterrence and Compellence*

This study limits itself to the examination of unconventional threats as a deterrent, rather than as a compellent. Although both deterrence and compellence are coercive strategies (Freedman, 2004, p. 27), and complementary activities (Pape, 1996, p. 7), they are conceptually different: while deterrence persuades an opponent that he must not act, compellence requires acting in a certain way. There is a general agreement in the literature that compellence is harder to achieve than deterrence, because, most argue, it is more difficult to get somebody to do, re-do, or stop doing something, than it is to motivate someone not to do that same something (Pape, 1996, p. 6; Morgan, 2003, p. 2; Freedman, 2004, p. 110). Because compellence forces an opponent to act in a certain way, it usually brings greater humiliation to him (Art, 1980, p. 7). By contrast, deterrence is primarily a status quo strategy, i.e., the opponent's compliance is manifested by his choosing not to act. The reason why this limitation is important to understand for the present discussion is that, deterrent threats are inherently more credible than compellent threats. In Pape's words, "threats that deter may not coerce" (Pape, 1996, p. 6).

b. *Weak, Non-Aligned, Status Quo States*

Although unconventional deterrence is not necessarily limited to weak states, and strong states, as well, can use unconventional threats in their overall security strategies, this study concentrates on weak states. However, both in theory and in practice, it is impossible to draw clear boundaries between weak and strong states (or small states versus great powers). Therefore, definitions of weak states tend to be very imprecise. Among the majority of theoreticians, the consensus appears to exist only on one point with regard to weak states: the characteristic, central to the definition of weak states, is that they cannot defend themselves by their own efforts against any of the great powers (Handel, 1981, p. 76). In other words, military weakness and inability to secure its own existence are central in defining what constitutes weak states. For the purpose of this study, we accept the notion that "weakness" is a relative term, rather than being absolute. Any state can find itself in a position of either being an underdog, or being a "great power," vis-à-vis their particular opponent (e.g., Iraq versus the US, and Iraq

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versus Kuwait, respectively). Thus, the weak state is "one that has a narrow 'power base,' compared to the other state(s) with which it interacts, especially those with which it has conflicts" (Platias, 1994, p. 45).

Being more precise, and going to the essence of the matter, this thesis concentrates on weak states. Weak states, in the words of John J. Mearsheimer (1983), find themselves in unenviable situations, where "the asymmetry is so great that the attacker does not have the slightest doubt that he will succeed on the battlefield" (p. 59). In turn, according to the author, when this lack of balance of forces is overwhelming, "the concept of [conventional] deterrence does not really apply" (Mearsheimer, 1983, p. 59). Of course, it would be naïve to argue that Mearsheimer is completely wrong, and that there is an easy way out of this predicament. The difficulty of this predicament is nicely illustrated in a popular Finnish war novel when it says, "One Finn may be worth ten Russians but what do we do when the eleventh comes along?" (as cited in Handel, 1981, p. 76). However, this should not preclude one from looking for remedies for this intrinsic weakness. On the contrary, keeping mind limited resources available to weak states, and overwhelming misbalances of power, this study looks for an optimal strategy of a weak state, to inflict the largest amount of pain and cost (and, in turn, to deter by it).

In addition, pure unconventional deterrence does not seem to be the best option for aligned states, or for those that are involved in extended deterrence. Generally speaking, a weak state that concentrates its defense according to the expectations of an external military assistance, normally needs to defend some important strategic points of their national territory, in order to facilitate the intervention of its allies. In turn, that is inherently inconsistent with unconventional capabilities, which are not the best means for holding territory. Therefore, this study is limited to neutral, or non-aligned, weak states which, for whatever reason, concentrate their efforts primarily on the mobilization of internal resources to guarantee their defense.

Another distinction must be made between status quo and revisionist states. Since "weakness" is a relative concept, any state can find itself in a position of either being an underdog, or being a "great power," vis-à-vis its opponent, and of being either a defender, or a challenger of the status quo. The reason why this distinction is

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important for our discussion is that, for a relatively weak state that not only seeks to deter the strong from aggression, but also aims to challenge the existing status quo, pure unconventional deterrence would not be the best strategy. Although the nature of war is changing, a revisionist state needs to maintain larger or smaller conventional forces for expansionist purposes (e.g., to occupy opponent's territories, control it, implement occupational duties, etc.), because entirely unconventional forces appear to be not enough for these tasks in most cases. Therefore, pure unconventional deterrence seems to be limited to weak states that are satisfied with the status quo. That is not to say, however, that revisionist states cannot use unconventional capabilities as a part of their overall strategies.

C.   METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach used here is primarily theoretical. This study combines insights from deterrence, and "small war" theories, to outline a framework for unconventional deterrence strategies. Because unconventional deterrence has not been used as an elaborate strategy, there is no basis for a pure inductive approach. That is, there is no sample of case studies to analyze, construct a theory, and proceed to testing it.[4] On the other hand, the broad spectrum of existing literature on deterrence theory and practice lets one identify commonly agreed upon requirements for successful deterrence, examining them deductively to see how these conditions can be satisfied by a weak state, i.e. one trying to deter a great power through the use of unconventional threats.

In addition, insights drawn from small war theories are used to discuss the dynamics of small wars. Students of small wars deal with a paradoxical phenomenon, namely why some conflicts do not conform to the "iron rule of power," and an underdog is able to defeat the strong in war. Therefore, their insights are functionally significant for examining unconventional deterrence. As we will see below in the discussion, many determinants of small wars also reflect the requirements for successful deterrence.[5]

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[4] This problem reflects the development of nuclear deterrence theory and strategies during the Cold War. Although nuclear weapons were used in war, "there was no basis for an inductive theory" (Freedman, 2004, p. 22). In other words, there were no cases of failures or successes of nuclear deterrence to be analyzed.

[5] Warfigthing, as well as defense, and deterrence are not the same. However, they overlap. One can better deter by making an opponent to believe that he has capabilities not only to inflict an unbearable cost, but also to win a war. All things being equal, the higher the probability, perceived by a challenger, that he could loose a war, the more credible deterrence will be.

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The problematic part of this study, as mentioned above, is that there are no cases where a weak state utilizes unconventional deterrence. Therefore, the only option to support or deny propositions made in this study, is to analyze the actual cases where guerrilla warfare was been used to fight against the strong. In other words, the "model" is tested indirectly. The assumption is that if the weak can deny the objectives of the strong, via a particular type of warfare, it is reasonable to suggest that the threat of this kind of resistance can be used as a deterrent. In addition, in the majority of cases where the weak denies the strong his objectives by unconventional warfare, the weak actor is a sub-group within a state, rather than being a state, itself. However, this thesis contends that there are no reasons to suggest that the weak state cannot exploit the advantages of this kind of warfare, as well.

Two cases are analyzed in this study – the Vietnam War of 1964-73, and the Afghanistan War of 1979-89. However, because these cases have been widely analyzed, there are no extensive historical reviews of either conflict in the text. Both wars were chosen from an extensive list of guerrilla wars for the following reasons: 1) both are classic examples of the stronger side losing a war against the weaker side who used guerrilla tactics; 2) the asymmetry of power in both cases was very high – in both cases, the strong was a recognized superpower; 3) the regimes of the stronger in the two conflicts were of a different type, one being authoritarian (i.e., the USSR) and the other democratic (i.e., the US). Hence, this thesis has avoided limiting itself to the notion that only democracies fight small wars badly.

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II.   UNCONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE

A.   DEFINITION OF UNCONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE

The essence of deterrence is preventing the other party from doing something unacceptable, through threats of harming him if he does (Morgan, 2003, p. 1). According to Lawrence Freedman (2004), deterrence is a deliberate manipulation of the behavior of others, through conditional threats (p. 6). In strategic studies, however, deterrence is defined more narrowly and precisely. Paul K. Huth (1988), for example, defines deterrence "as a policy that seeks to persuade an adversary, through the threat of military retaliation, that the cost of using military force to resolve political conflict will outweigh the benefits" (p. 15). Thus, military threats, as a means of persuading an enemy not to attack, are central to deterrence. Threats, either through denial of the opponent's objectives on the battlefield (i.e., "counter-force strategies"), or via punishment strikes that have no military purposes, at all (i.e., "counter-value strategies"), are designed to change an opponent's calculations about any prospective gains, if he considers attacking. Two widely analyzed types of deterrence – conventional and nuclear – are based on different kind of capabilities, and on different modes of inflicting cost through the use of these capabilities. While conventional deterrence is mostly associated with conventional forces denying an opponent's objectives on the battlefield, nuclear deterrence is primarily based upon punitive, or retaliatory, strikes, through the threat of using nuclear weapons on, primarily, non-military or quasi-military targets. However, neither conventional nor nuclear deterrence is strictly limited to counter-force and counter-value strategies, respectively. Conventional deterrence is sometimes associated with punishment (e.g., strategic bombing campaigns with conventional weapons), and nuclear weapons can be used on tactical levels to deny an opponent's objectives on the battlefield. Furthermore, war-fighting schools argue that the credibility of nuclear deterrence depends on the threatening party's ability to fight, and win at any level, even in an all-out nuclear war (Morgan, 2003, p. 24).

Following the logic of distinguishing between conventional and nuclear deterrence, unconventional deterrence can be defined as persuasion of the opponent not to attack via threats of unconventional warfare, such as guerrilla war and terrorism,

including their various subcategories (e.g., assassinations of politico-military leadership, cyber-terrorism, terrorism by WMD, etc.).[6] While guerrilla warfare is mostly connected with counter-force strategies, terrorism is based on punishment. Figure 1 illustrates the typology of deterrence, with a new type added, beside two basic types of deterrence – conventional and nuclear.
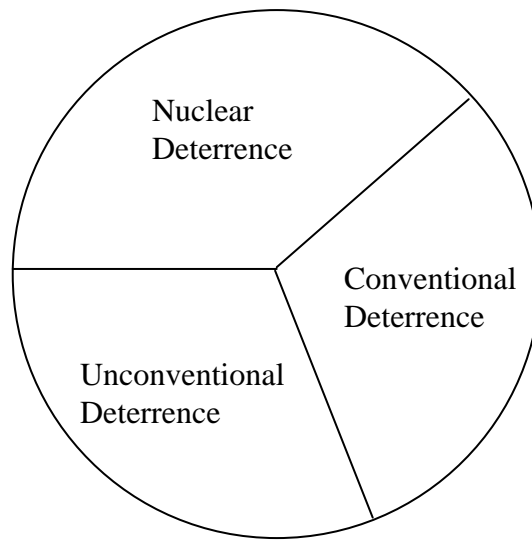

Figure 1.   Typology of Deterrence

However, these types of deterrence do not have to be treated as very rigid, and in some cases, the boundaries between them is blurred. For example, the threat of using tactical nuclear weapons is very close to conventional deterrence, because tactical nuclear weapons are designed primarily to deny opponent's objectives on the battlefield. The Finns' small unit tactics, which were adopted to fight against Russia during the Winter War, would be considered somewhere between unconventional and conventional deterrence. One could even argue that there is nothing unconventional in regular forces using small unit attacks. A hypothetical scenario might be presented by a weak state that hides a nuclear device in the opponents' city, and threatens to activate this device in the case of aggression. This would verge on being considered nuclear deterrence.

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[6] Sometimes the term 'unconventional' is used to indicate non-conventional forces or nuclear weapons and WMD. However, it is more common in military science to refer by 'unconventional' to guerrilla warfare, terrorism, and other shadowy ways of warfare. Therefore, the usage of 'unconventional' seems to be appropriate in this study.

The other question, associated with unconventional deterrence, is the place of deterrence through the use of, or threat thereof, weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in this typology. Although deterrence by WMD can be treated as a separate type, due to its specificity, it seems more reasonable to deconstruct this term, and to look at in what mode each of WMD can be used. For example, as long as weak states develop nuclear capabilities (i.e., what is referred to today as proliferation of WMD), and arm their ballistic missiles with nuclear war-heads, that does not seem to be conceptually different from the nuclear deterrence used by both superpowers in the Cold War. In contrast, if a radiological or nuclear bomb, for example, were secretly delivered to an opponent's country, this mode of utilizing nuclear capability would, clearly, fit into the realm of unconventional deterrence. The same logic can be applied to chemical weapons, which can be used on the conventional battlefield, in terrorist acts, or utilized to arm ballistic missiles for retaliatory strikes on population centers. In brief, as long as WMD are used for threatening a terrorist attack, these threats shall be considered unconventional deterrence. Other ways of utilizing them do not seem to be different from orthodox deterrence categories – nuclear and conventional – that aim at either denial of opponent's battlefield objective, or punishment of his population on a large scale.

B.   UNCONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE STRATEGIES

As mentioned previously, deterrence theory groups deterrence strategies into two general categories – punishment and denial.[7] Unconventional deterrence strategies, as well, fit into this general framework, and threats have to be designed either to punish the challenger (primarily through terrorist acts), or to deny him his objectives (mainly via guerrilla resistance). However, in this study, denial is defined more broadly than in the works on conventional deterrence. Mearsheimer (1983), for example, considers denial only as a function of denying an aggressor his battlefield objectives (p. 15). Pape (1996) appears to criticize deterrence theorists, because, he says, they usually refer to denial only to defeat of an anticipated attack. According to Pape, denial operates via military means to prevent the targeted party from achieving its political objectives (p. 13). Thus, in unconventional deterrence, the function of denial is to threaten the challenger in order to

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[7] Distinction between denial and punishment was first elaborated by Glenn Snyder (1961).

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deny to him his political, rather than his battlefield, objectives. In contrast to conventional deterrence, battlefields are to be deliberately avoided, and holding territory is not an objective in unconventional deterrence.

However, one has to acknowledge that, in unconventional deterrence, the boundaries between denial and punishment strategies are far blurrier than in conventional and nuclear deterrence. Freedman (2004) argues that denial has punitive elements, as well, but, essentially, tends toward controlling a situation in order to deny the opponent strategic options (p. 37). Therefore, if we consider deterrence strategies as ranging on a punishment-denial spectrum, the more opponents are allowed to maneuver freely, the more strategy moves towards the punishment pole of the spectrum. In unconventional deterrence, because guerrilla warfare is not one of the best means for holding territory, the deterrer deliberately concedes territory to the aggressor. Therefore, the aggressor, inevitably, have more freedom to maneuver, especially in the military realm. Also, though the targets of guerrilla attacks are primarily military (i.e., counter-force strategies), they do not have a clear-cut military value, *per se,* as in conventional denial. Guerrilla attacks are intended, primarily, to diminish the opponent's will, instead of trying to defeat him military. In sum, in unconventional deterrence, denial strategies appear to involve more punitive elements than denial in conventional deterrence, because the former operate to deny the opponent of his long-term political objective, and are not aimed at gaining a short-term military victory. In order to achieve the former objective, the weak state has to concede the latter (i.e., military victory) to the aggressor.

Hence, based on the distinction between denial and punishment, one can identify two main strategies of unconventional deterrence – guerrilla warfare and terrorism. While the former is about threatening to deny an opponent his political objectives, the latter concentrates on punishing his population.

Guerrilla warfare, although usually associated with revolutionary and subversive wars, insurgencies, insurrections, etc., is treated primarily as combat tactics in this study. As Klonis suggests, what defines guerrillas is how they fight, but not why, where, or when (as cited in Hoffman, 2000, p. 12). Likewise, Samuel Huntington agrees when he says that, "guerrilla warfare is a form of warfare by which the strategically weaker side

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assumes the tactical offensive in selected forms, times, and places" (as cited in Laqueur, 1998, p. 392). In other words, guerrilla warfare is all about harassing the enemy and exhausting him, via hit-and-run attacks in a frontless war, instead of trying to annihilate him in decisive battles.[8] Guerrillas seek to protract conflicts, thus making them too costly and uncomfortable for the enemy, instead of trying to win it quickly, via attrition of the enemy's forces. Urban and rural guerrilla warfare are usually distinguished as being two different alternatives. However, many analysts observe that urban guerrilla warfare tends to move rather quickly into terrorism.[9] Decapitation, or targeting political and/or military leadership, usually is a part of guerrilla warfare, implemented on a tactical level. However, it can also be used also as a separate strategy of unconventional deterrence. In other words, assassinations of key leadership, especially high-level decision-makers, can be utilized as a basic deterrent threat, employed on a strategic level.[10]

Likewise, terrorism is a broad socio-political phenomenon. In this work, however, terrorism is considered as being tactics of attacking non-combatants for political purposes.[11] More precisely, terrorism, as an unconventional deterrence strategy, is the threat of pure punitive retaliation – i.e., attacking civilians with no military purpose, at all. As a deterrence strategy, therefore, it tends to be similar to nuclear deterrence (or, in the words of Morgan (2003, p. 15), "hostage-taking on the large scale"), but on a smaller scale. In terms of what is being targeted, discriminate and indiscriminate terrorism can be distinguished as separate strategies. In the sense that terrorism is, in general, not as violent as nuclear weapons, or conventional strategic bombing (maybe with the exception of precision guided munitions), a feasible strategic choice is to employ violent methods more indiscriminately (e.g., threatening to target particular individuals, such as relatives of high-level decision-makers, etc.). At the other end of the spectrum, where the destruction is, at least theoretically, highest, is terrorism by WMD. From the perspective of the theoreticians of nuclear deterrence, who see the credibility of nuclear deterrence as a function of high destructiveness, terrorism by WMD would be the only feasible strategy

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[8] See Delbruck (1985, pp. 293-295) on distinction between annihilation and exhaustion strategies.

[9] See on guerrilla warfare, for example, Asprey (1994), Laqueur (1998), and Beckett (2001).

[10] Decapitation as a separate strategy, although implemented by air power, is elaborated by Pape (1996, pp. 79-86).

[11] See on the definition of terrorism, for example, Laqueur (2004, pp. 232-238).

of unconventional deterrence. In contrast, cyber-terrorism, or terrorism in cyberspace and/or from cyberspace, is ideally based, not on destruction, rather on disruption.[12] The infliction of economic damage is a primary objective, although not the only one. As Dan Verton (2004) argues, an attack from cyberspace, coupled with a physical attack, could have the largest consequences, in terms of devastation.

Although this thesis distinguishes between terrorism and guerrilla warfare, as two, conceptually different strategic choices, in practice, such strategies can be more intertwined than ideal models suggest. Terrorizing civilians is common in guerrilla warfare, but usually only on a tactical level. Likewise, the process of political discourse can, subjectively, obscure the distinction between two strategies. For example, two events, commonly identified as terrorist acts – the 1983 bombing of the US Marine barracks in Beirut, and the 2000 bombing of the *USS Cole* in Aden – have, in fact, more attributes of guerrilla warfare, than of terrorism. However, this confusion poses conceptually different problems that go beyond the scope of deterrence theory. Deterrence theory neglects the problems that are posed by the implementation of threats, as long as the opponent believes that such threats are credible and will be implemented.[13]

The more important question that needs to be considered, is whether denial or punishment (or, in our case, guerrilla warfare or terrorism) would be more effective as an unconventional deterrence strategy. Unfortunately, deterrence theory does not provide an unambiguous answer. For example, Barry Buzan (1994) argues that nuclear retaliation is the only feasible strategy of deterrence, because of the exceptional level of destructiveness. Buzan says, "deterrence logic does not work very well with conventional weapons, because there is always the possibility that your opponent will take the risk" (p. 26). According to this logic, only terrorism by WMD can be considered a feasible deterrent, as long as the opponent believes that the party threatening is able and willing to

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[12] On cyber-terrorism and vulnerabilities of developed nations, see for example Verton (2004).

[13] For example, nuclear deterrence does not consider the morality, and legitimacy of targeting civilians *per se*. The question of targeting civilians is only considered in the context of deterrence credibility. In other words, the core of the problem is not that it is unethical to target civilians but that opponent may not believe that the deterrer is ready to inflict a very large amount of destructiveness on the deterree's population for some unessential (from the deterree's perspective) reason.

inflict large-scale destruction.[14] On the other hand, Freedman (2004) makes an argument that, "in principle, denial is a more reliable strategy than punishment, because if the threats have to be implemented, it offers control rather than continuing coercion. With punishment, the target is left to decide how much more to take. With denial the choice is removed" (p. 39). Huntington adds that denial alone is not enough, and that a punitive element needs to boost the threat (as cited in Freedman, 2004, p. 38). Likewise, Kenneth Watman and Dean Wilkening (1996) suggest that, for opponents who are motivated to avert perceived lose (i.e., harder to deter), deterrence requires threats to deny their objectives, with additional threats to punish the regime (p. 85). Overall, Freedman (2004) concludes, "comparative advantage of one over the other will in the end depend on the options available" (p. 39).[15]

With regard to unconventional deterrence, there is no evidence to suggest that the logic would be different: the adoption of any strategy depends on the strategic environment, available options, and the opponent's vulnerabilities. What is reasonable to argue is that if an aggressor's attack has only limited aims, unconventional deterrence by denial most likely would not obtain. For example, if the aggressor needs to occupy a small piece of the deterrer's territory for limited military aims (e.g., to install a missile launching pad), and does not have any long-term political objectives in said country, the threat of guerrilla warfare probably would not work. Since the opponent does not have any long-term political objectives, it makes no sense to threaten him with the denial of his political objectives. In this case, a punishment strategy would be a priority over denial.

In addition, it is logical to suggest that due to limited destructiveness of unconventional threats (with the possible exception of WMD), the declared response to aggression has to be tailored much more carefully to the fears of specific opponent, his society, and leadership involved.

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[14] In the strategic and political discourse, the use of the concept of WMD (which usually includes nuclear, biological, radiological, and chemical weapons) is problematic and imprecise *per se*, because sometimes a terrorist act by conventional bomb can be more destructive than by, for example, chemical weapon. Most likely, only nuclear and biological terrorism can inflict relatively large-scale destructiveness.

[15] Pape (1996) also concludes that denial strategies operate better than punitive (with the exception of nuclear punishment). However, his analysis is limited to coercion strategies, not deterrence. Since both are conceptually different, we cannot make inferences from Pape's findings.

C.   LOW DESTRUCTIVENESS, COST SENSITIVITY, AND LIMITED RATIONALITY

The relatively limited destructiveness of unconventional threats appears to be one of the most problematic parts of unconventional deterrence. As Morgan (2003) suggests, motivating opponents via threats of precise loss is far more complex than through threats of doing vast damage (p. 223). Even conventional deterrence has been criticized as being inherently unreliable, because of its relatively low destructive power, when compared with nuclear weapons. In other words, in conventional deterrence, there is always a possibility that the aggressor will take the risk (Buzan, 1994, p. 26). Watman and Wilkening (1995) also agree that conventional forces will never be as deterring as nuclear weapons. "Nuclear forces simply are inherently more impressive and clear in their destructiveness" (Watman and Wilkening, 1995, p. 29). Obviously, this problem of low destructiveness is exacerbated in unconventional deterrence. It is reasonable to suggest that bands of guerrillas will not be as impressive as lined-up divisions near the border, and sniper rifles will not be as clear in their destructiveness as precision-guided munitions. Hence, in unconventional deterrence, there is an even greater possibility that the opponent will take a risk.

Also, limited destructiveness is closely connected with the aggressors' cost sensitivity, in both material and human terms. Since the deterrent threats need to change the aggressor's cost-benefit calculations, there would always be a question, in unconventional deterrence, whether the cost that can be inflicted by unconventional deterrence is large enough to be "unbearable," or unacceptable, for the aggressor. Because of the limited destructiveness of threats, it may be very rational that an aggressor would choose to suffer the cost. Thus, the degree to which the opponent is cost-sensitive is of high importance in unconventional deterrence. That is, the more the aggressor is insensitive to the cost, the more unreliable unconventional deterrence would be in practice.

In addition to the possibility that the aggressor's decision to attack and suffer a cost may be rational, because of the low destructiveness of unconventional threats, the prospects of deterrence success can be even more impaired by the "bounded", or limited, rationality of an opponent. According to the concept of limited rationality (which seems

to be broadly acknowledged in deterrence theory as closely reflecting decision-making in practice), decision-making usually satisfies minimum criteria of rationality, or "reasonable" relationship between values, objectives, and decisions. At the same time, however, decision-making can suffer from a wide range of errors and misperceptions, such as, lack of information, group-think, time constraint, "analytic bias" (i.e., overestimating one's and underestimating the opponent's capabilities), general psychological (i.e., non-pathological) influences, miscalculations, cognitive biases, ignorance of low-probability outcomes, wishful thinking, etc. (Davis & Arquilla, 1991b). Therefore, Keith B. Payne suggests that it is necessary "to examine as closely as possible the particular opponent's thinking – its beliefs and thought filters" (2003, p. xi). Although these subjective and contextual factors influencing the opponent's decision-making are of high importance for any deterrence strategy, the present study argues that due to the low destructiveness of deterrent threats, the degree to which the opponent's rationality is "bounded" matters even more in unconventional deterrence. In other words, the question is whether the low destructiveness of unconventional threats could get through the aggressor's psychological and cognitive self-defensive mechanisms (e.g., wishful thinking, underestimation of deterrer's capabilities, etc.). There is an argument in deterrence theory that the reliability of a nuclear deterrent rests on vast damage, which, supposedly, is so devastating in its effects that it overwhelms all self-defensive barriers in the opponent's decision-making process. That is to say, that any eventual expression of limited rationality in the decision-making process becomes irrelevant, because only an insane opponent can choose to be undeterrable, knowing the devastating consequences. In contrast, the logic in unconventional deterrence seems to be completely the reverse. Due to the limited destructiveness of unconventional threats, it is more difficult to influence the opponent's decision-making process. In other words, if the aggressor, for example, has a preconception that his "glorious army" cannot be defeated by "lousy guerrillas," increasing the number of unconventional capabilities, most probably, would have little effect to change this predisposition.

Hence, the limited destructiveness of unconventional threats seems to be a problem inherent in unconventional deterrence: to deter an opponent via threats of precise loss is more difficult than through threats of devastating damage. Therefore, it is

reasonable to suggest, that in unconventional deterrence, strategies and threats have to tailored very carefully and precisely to a specific opponent, his leadership, and his society in order to produce the desired deterrent effect. This thesis contends that the lower the destructiveness of threats, the more precise tailoring of threats to the opponent's fears and vulnerabilities is needed. Most probably, for example, threats of cyber-terrorism would not have any deterrent effect for the opponent whose economy barely depends on information technologies. If the aggressor is not cost-sensitive in terms of human lives, the threats to target the relatives of decision-makers would, most likely, produce a better deterrent effect than would threats of indiscriminate terrorism. A low-intensity insurgency, perhaps, would be a deterrent if the leadership of a country has a preconception that the armed forces are meant to wage wars, not to build nations.

It is worth noting, however, that the position taken here is that the limited destructiveness of unconventional threats is their inherent weakness, and the most problematic area of unconventional deterrence, may not necessarily be true, or as problematic as suggested. Freedman (2004) states that criminological studies on deterrence appear to suggest that increasing the severity of punishment has less effect than does increasing the certainty that the "crime" will result in some punishment (p. 64). Unfortunately, it is difficult to find evidence whether this inference holds or not in deterrence among states. If it did, unconventional deterrence would be far less problematic than suggested in this study. However, it seems reasonable to argue that in either case, the weak would only increase the deterrent effect of their threats, by concentrating on boosting the level of certainty of some response to the aggression, notwithstanding the limited destructiveness of these threats.

D.   INTERNALIZED DETERRENCE

One of the circumstances most favorable to the use of unconventional deterrence, seems to be, when it can reinforce already internalized fears of the opponent. Unfortunately, deterrence theory does not explicitly address the importance of tracking internalized fears, and reinforcing them in deterrence strategies. The "rule of thumb" of deterrence is identifying an aggressor's values that can be threatened, and his vulnerabilities (Carns, 2001, p. 9), but not necessarily his internalized fears; fears that may, in fact, be different from his actual physical vulnerabilities. In other words,

deterrence theory does not consider the importance of an aggressor's unfortunate experience in past or present wars, an aggressor's awkwardness with some kinds of conflicts, or an aggressor's "lessons learned" (i.e., lessons that may have resulted in some fears) in order to tailor deterrence strategies.

Freedman (2004) satisfies this gap in the literature to a large degree by elaborating on the concept of internalized deterrence, which occurs when "deterrence is not being deliberately applied as a strategy, yet it still succeeds" (p. 29). In other words, internalized deterrence is a self-induced fear of the consequences, which can either have little basis in reality, or be a very accurate assessment of an opponent's response to actions against his interests. The basic element is that the "deterrer" remains passive (i.e., does not apply any deliberate steps) in his influence on the opponent's calculations.[16] According to Freedman (2004), "it is possible, indeed quite normal, to be persuaded against a particular course of action by the thought of how the target might respond. A would-be aggressor may thus be effectively deterred by an accurate assessment of the likely form of his potential victim's response without the victim having to do very much" (p. 30).

The best example of this kind of internalized deterrence, associated with unconventional deterrence strategies, is the aversion, especially of the US, to "small wars" (i.e., guerrilla conflicts). Gil Merom (2003) argues that, "the wish to avoid places and situations which can lead to small wars seems to govern the overall pattern of democratic interventions" (p. 247). It is usually argued that the fear of another Vietnam (the so-called "Vietnam syndrome") was an implicit reason of the US consistent refusal to commit ground troops in Bosnia in 1992-93, and in Kosovo in 1999 (Erdmann, 2002, p. 47; Merom, 2003, p. 247). The same reason precluded any consideration of committing U.S. troops to combat in the El Salvador insurgency in 1980s. Carnes Lord (1998) suggests that Saddam Hussein regime's survival in the first Gulf War, "was driven in a great measure by the desire of the military leadership to declare victory and disengage before being drawn into a Vietnam-like quagmire of low-intensity conflict." Moreover,

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[16] Sometimes, it is used the term 'self-deterrence' in policy debates. According to Freedman (2004), this phrase is wrong, because all deterrence in fact is self-deterrence: the intended deterree chooses to be deterred based on his calculations, whatever the quality of the threats (p. 30).

the U.S. fear of small wars, or, more precisely, the Vietnam lessons, are institutionalized in the Weinberger Doctrine of 1984, and in the subsequent, so-called, "Powell and Cheney" doctrines, which set preconditions for the U.S. military engagements: the U.S. national interest must be vital and clearly threatened; and the U.S. must employ overwhelming forces to win, not only decisively, but also quickly (Luttwak, 1995, p. 112; Merom, 2003, pp. 246-247; Lord, 1998). However, going beyond the U.S. examples, it is difficult to argue, without extensive analysis, whether the unfortunate experience in small wars always leaves some kind of internalized fears for frustrated great powers. Merom (2003) argues this is true for democracies. Most likely, for example, we would find internalized deterrence concerning guerrilla conflicts in Russia's strategic culture as well, based on the lost war in Afghanistan, and the continuing conflict in Chechnya.

According to Freedman (2004), there is nothing abnormal if an actor is deterred, even if there is no direct interaction. On the contrary, Freedman says internalized deterrence is a common phenomenon in practice. From the strategic perspective, however, the problem is not the existence of internalized deterrence, but "the development of strategies designed to produce a reliable deterrent effect" (p. 32). What is of high importance for unconventional deterrence is that weak states need to track the internal fears of great powers and adopt strategies that seek to reinforce and play on this internalized deterrence. If an opponent is averse to small wars, it is logical to threaten him with the prospects of guerrilla resistance, should he attack. If he had a bad experience in dealing with terrorism on a previous occasion (whether domestic or international), he would probably consider the prospects of punishment via retaliatory terrorist attacks more seriously. It is reasonable to argue that, to the degree that internalized deterrence exists in an opponent's strategic culture, unconventional deterrence strategies would be more feasible and credible.

E.   CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

Looking for conditions of successful deterrence has been the basic area of research of deterrence scholars. The fact that deterrence has been one of those rare theoretical concepts that has been both vitally important and practical, theoreticians have been forced toward analyzing the requirements for deterrence that could enable states to adopt effective and credible deterrent policies. Unfortunately, notwithstanding the

substantial body of theoretical and empirical works available, the more common conclusions appear to be contrary to expectations, namely that deterrence is inherently unreliable, and that there is no way of finding the general formula of conditions under which deterrence is likely to succeed or fail. However, theoretical and empirical findings suggest a number of widely agreed upon conditions, which can be useful in shaping coherent deterrence strategies.

In general, two facets of successful deterrence are usually discussed in the studies – capabilities and credibility. In other words, for deterrence to succeed, the deterrer must have the means to implement his threats, and the aggressor must believe that the threats will be implemented. Watman and Wilkening (1995) state that overall, successful deterrence is a function of these two elements, and that the lack of one can be compensated, to some extent, by an abundance of the other. That is, a strong will to act can compensate for less certain military capability, and, similarly, overwhelming military capability can compensate for some uncertainty about the will to act. However, if either of them is assessed to be zero, the overall reliability of deterrence would be zero, as well (p. 57).

Huth (1999) contends that deterrence theorists have focused on four sets of variables: the balance of military forces, signaling and bargaining behavior, reputation, and interests at stake (p. 25). While the first is associated with the concept of a party's capabilities, the latter three are facets of credibility. The concept of "strategy," an additional facet of a party's capabilities, will also be discussed, as well as two elements of credibility – legitimacy and will. Although these are not broadly accepted as key determinants in deterrence theory, they may matter for unconventional deterrence. As well, it is worth noting that, because we find that only the concept of capabilities appears to function differently, somehow, in unconventional deterrence, from the way it functions in classic deterrence theory, the concept of credibility is not so extensively discussed.

1. Capabilities

a. Military Balance

Although the importance of the balance of military capabilities is an unsettled issue in deterrence theory, the military capabilities between deterrer and attacker have been given the most attention in analyzing deterrence situations (Huth &

Russett, 1984, p. 501). As mentioned above, the underlying hypothesis of commonly-held deterrence theory is based on military balance. This is clearly shown by Russet (1994) when he writes, "shifts in the military balance in favor of the defender will make challenges less likely, whereas shifts in the military balance in favor of the challenger will make challenge more likely" (p. 41). It seems that because of this focus on military balance, the possibility of the weak deterring the strong is not discussed at all, in deterrence theory. The weak state, by default, is militarily inferior to the greater power. Even though, as Morgan (2003) suggests, "the military superiority is not the key for successful deterrence" (p. 165), the tacit agreement among scholars is that the deterrer needs to be somewhat evenly matched with the aggressor, in terms of levels of force possessed. As Mearsheimer (1983) elaborates on a position that appears to be a point of view shared by the majority of deterrence scholars, if the lack of balance of military forces between antagonists is overwhelming, deterrence does not work, because the strong is able, literally, to overrun the underdog (p. 59). In theory, the only exception would be the notion of finite deterrence, when the weak may deter an attack by a great power, because the stronger power fears being weakened vis-à-vis another great power, especially during times of war (Handel, 1981, p. 92, p. 258).

Concerning the balance of military capabilities, several studies have found that local, or short-term, military balance is more important than strategic, or long-term, capabilities (for example, Huth, 1988). In other words, having the capabilities to repulse an attack from the very outset, thus, preventing a quick and decisive victory, increases the prospect of the deterrence being successful. Although this finding, *per se,* is not very relevant for the weak (i.e., rarely can underdogs match great powers, even in terms of short-term military capabilities), the explication of this finding is of high importance for unconventional deterrence. In essence, the conclusion that the prospect of a deterrence's success increases significantly if the defender has military capabilities to prevent a quick victory, rests on the argument that aggressors prefer to utilize their military forces quickly and decisively, and do not like protracted and expensive wars (Mearsheimer, 1983; Huth, 1988, 1999; Watman & Wilkening, 1995; Glaser & Kaufman, 1998). According to Huth (1999), "the strategic orientation of potential attackers is generally short-term and driven by concerns about military cost and mission effectiveness" (p. 31). What this implies for

deterrence is that "deterrence is best served when the attacker believes that his only alternative is a protracted war" (Mearsheimer, 1983, p. 64). Likewise, Watman and Wilkening (1995) suggest that if denying the adversary a quick, cheap victory is most important, the military capabilities that can perform that task are most relevant for deterrence (p. 68).

This leads to the inference that military capabilities that can deny a cheap and quick victory have the greatest deterrent influence (Watman & Wilkening, 1995, p. 67). It also has direct application for the use of guerrilla warfare tactics, which, in essence, is all about protracting a war instead of trying to defeat the opponent in decisive battles. In turn, this implies that the weak state, which cannot match-up with the great power, in terms of long- and short-term military capabilities, may likely increase the deterrent effect of its forces by focusing on a guerrilla warfare approach, and threatening the aggressor with a protracted guerrilla war. According to Thomas X. Hammes (2004), this is precisely the message that the Iraqi insurgents are sending for the US – "You are engaged in an endless, unwinnable fight." Of course, deterrence requires having such capabilities, and communicating such messages in advance, not after the war has started.

To be precise, most of the above mentioned theoreticians, when elaborating on the notion that aggressors do not like protracted and costly wars, specify that they are speaking about 'wars of attrition'.[17] In fact, this should preclude the present study from using their inferences, because in strictly strategic terms, guerrilla war is a war of exhaustion, not of attrition. However, it is reasonable to believe that aggressors would not like long wars of exhaustion, anymore than they would wars of attrition, as long as they are protracted, costly, and preclude aggressors from obtaining quick victories, and the realization of their political objectives. Definitely, all things being equal, a long war of attrition would be more costly than that would a war of fighting guerrillas. However, this does not mean that guerrilla resistance cannot protract a war and make it costly, in both human and material terms. Handel (1981) suggests that guerrilla warfare has enormously raised the human and material cost for any intervening power (p.

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[17] The authors do not explicate why protracted wars should be necessary that of attrition in order to be disliked by aggressors. Most likely, they tacitly assume that only wars of attrition are costly enough for the aggressors. In general, they omit guerrilla wars in their analysis, most likely to simplify them.

273). After discussing the cost of the Vietnam War for the US, Handel (1981) concludes that, "the days when a hundred United States Marines disguised as legation guards in Nicaragua could control and maintain peace in a weak country are over" (p. 275).

In sum, unconventional capabilities can have deterrent effects, if the aggressor believes that he can be prevented from obtaining a quick and cheap victory. The problematic aspect, however, is that guerrilla warfare appears to defy all the rules of calculating offensive/defensive force, and force-to-space ratios.[18] In other words, military balance, the facet of deterrence that has received the most attention in analyzing deterrence situations, becomes useless as an analytical tool if the deterrer threatens to deny the aggressor of his objectives, via engaging him in a guerrilla war. In case of employing terrorism as a means of punishment, the military balance would be even more irrelevant. Concerning guerrilla warfare, at least, it is logical to argue that the more troops an aggressor has on the ground, the more difficult it would be for guerrillas to operate. However, if the deterrer threatens to punish the aggressor's population with terrorist acts, the aggressor's superior military capabilities become irrelevant to a large degree. Therefore, it appears that in unconventional deterrence, the sheer numbers of military forces available for both sides does not matter as much as does the deterrer's strategy. In other words, if the weak state is able to adopt a strategy that decreases the utility of the aggressor's military capabilities, increases prospects of protracting the war, and threatens to deny an aggressor his political objectives, even considerably inferior military capabilities can have some deterrent effect.

b.   Strategy

Both military capabilities and a strategy, or a plan of employing armed forces to achieve military and/or political objectives (Arreguin-Toft, 2001, p. 99), are integral parts of overall military power. It is logical to argue that armed forces, no matter how enormous they are, will never unfold their full potential without a coherent and elaborate plan of how they are to be employed. More importantly, as Thomas G. Mahnken (1993) suggests, "military effectiveness is the result of developing a strategy to

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[18] T. E. Lawrence's attempt to shape guerrilla warfare into the exact science (including calculations of force ratios) is usually criticized as having resulted in overly broad generalizations, and not having much explanatory power. See on Lawrence's approach to guerrilla warfare, for example, Laqeuer (1998, pp. 169-171), Beckett (2001, pp. 19-20), and Asprey (1994, pp. 179-191).

pit one's strengths against an opponent's weaknesses." However, notwithstanding this natural inextricable link between military force and strategy, deterrence theory focuses only on balance of military capabilities. With the exception of nuclear deterrence (which considers targeting strategies), the strategies of opponents appears to be largely irrelevant as being determinates for success or failure in deterrence theory.

A notable exception to this is Mearsheimer's (1983) analysis of the importance of interaction of opponents' strategies for deterrence outcomes. He postulates that, "conventional deterrence is directly related to military strategy, or more specifically, to the matter of how a nation's armed forces are employed to achieve specific battlefield objectives" (p. 28). Mearsheimer concludes that deterrence is most likely to obtain if the deterrer is able to deny the aggressor a successful "blitzkrieg" option (i.e., achieving a quick and decisive victory), thus, making a protracted war of attrition a certainty. However, he narrows his analysis only to conventional deterrence, and states, in straightforward fashion, that his theory does not apply to guerrilla wars, such as the Vietnam War (p. 15). Because of this omission of guerrilla warfare as a strategy of war, Mearsheimer, as mentioned above, comes to the orthodox conclusion that the military balance matters when he claims that, only when opponents possess about equal military capabilities, does strategy become a determinant of deterrence. Yet if the Vietnam War, or other guerrilla conflict, had been included in the Mearsheimer's analysis, his conclusion – "deterrence is largely a function of military strategy" (p. 7) – would have been more general and more broadly applicable. It appears to be reasonable to suggest that if a military strategy can be adopted to deny an opponent his objectives or prevent a *fait accompli*, strategy will matter in any kind of deterrence, not only in conventional deterrence.

In unconventional deterrence, strategy appears to be of a high importance for determining a deterrence's success or failure. Because weak states will never be able to match great powers, in terms of military might, their adoption of the right strategy is the only option to increase the deterrent effect of their inferior military capabilities. As Athanassios G. Platias (1994) posits, "in the confrontation of two unequal states, the small state's success in dissuading a possible attack is highly dependant on a strategy it adopts" (p. 45). In other words, Platias (1994) offers a highly relevant insight for

unconventional deterrence – for a small state, a strategy can make the difference between the success and failure of deterrence (p. 59). However, this author fails to elaborate what strategies are those that can be adopted by the weak to maximize the deterrent effect. In turn, Platias concludes that qualitative superiority – e.g., superior technology, military organization, and operational methods – is a way to maximize deterrence without having to match, in quantity, the adversary's forces (1994, p. 59). However, this notion of qualitative superiority easily fits into the balance of military capabilities (i.e., calculations of balance of military capabilities usually includes the qualitative differences, as well), and has little to do with the strategies adopted.

In brief, unconventional deterrence appears to be a necessity for the weak state, vis-à-vis a greater power, because weak states will have, neither enough short-term military capabilities to repulse the attack, nor long-term, or strategic, capabilities to threaten aggressors with a protracted war of attrition. Thus, guerrilla warfare, as a denial strategy, and terrorism, as a punishment strategy, are two ways for underdogs to maximize deterrence: while guerrilla warfare strategy protracts a conflict, terrorism makes most of the aggressor's military capabilities irrelevant.

2.   Credibility

a.   *Balance of Motivations*

The "balance of motivations," and its main element, interests at stake, seem to be the most readily analyzed aspect of credibility in deterrence situations. In fact, while the balance of military forces is the main component of capabilities, the balance of motivations is the main element of credibility. According to Watman and Wilkening (1995), "classical deterrence theory has long stressed the importance of strength of interests as a means of making deterrence threats credible to the adversary" (p. 6). In addition, it appears that the motivations of opponents, as a determinant for deterrence success or failure, has become, over time, more emphasized in deterrence theory. For example, Freedman (2004) states that interests represent the most likely independent variable in many deterrence situations (p. 47). Likewise, Morgan (2003) appears to argue that the opponents' motivations play a very important role in determining deterrence outcomes (p. 288).

The balance of motivations is mostly a function of interests at stake, or the "balance of interest." However, besides interests, a few intangible elements also appear to be a part the overall balance of motivations. Although such intangible aspects – which are considered as the components of "will" in this study[19] – as readiness to sacrifice, national cohesiveness, religious faith, bellicosity, etc. are not easily analyzable or measurable, they may amplify (or de-emphasize), to some degree, the interests at stakes in deterrence situations. For example, entrenched religious dogmas to fight "infidels" would likely amplify the aggressor's perception of the deterrer's interests at stake. On the other hand, the lack of national cohesiveness may deemphasize the importance of territorial integrity. As well, it is worth noting that although will seems to be a relatively important element for the balance of motivations in deterrence situations, in general, some of the facets of will may have a particularly great influence for boosting unconventional deterrence strategies. For example, since guerrilla resistance requires population support, the cohesiveness of population (i.e., perceived by the enemy) may increase significantly the credibility of unconventional deterrence. Hence, the balance of motivations is not strictly associated only with interests at stake, and even though they are the main element, they can be reinforced or diminished by some intangible aspects of will.

Concerning the concept of interests at stake, deterrence theory "predicts that if the balance of interests favors the defender deterrence should hold" (Lieberman, 1995, p. 7). Deterrence theory usually explains the functioning of balance of interests, in practice, in terms of the resolve to use force, and, especially, willingness to suffer military losses. In other words, the more the issues at stake matter for the opponents, the more they are prepared to suffer to protect these interests (Freedman, 2004, p. 47). Regarding unconventional deterrence, or, more precisely, deterrence of the strong by the weak, the question is whether it is possible to establish some logic predicting the eventual balance of interests. This thesis posits that, in most situations, the asymmetry of interests would likely be in favor of the weak, because the greater power's attack on the weak state would most probably threaten the national survival of the latter. In contrast, the stronger

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[19] The concept of will is sometimes used alternatively with the concept of credibility in deterrence studies. We think that the credibility is much more complex than the term "will" suggests. Therefore, we use the concept of will more narrowly, indicating such obscure intangible aspects as national cohesion, religious fervor, etc., which may or may not amplify or reduce overall credibility.

parties usually do not need to choose between survival and non-survival while considering attacking the weaker. However strong and strategically important his interests are, they probably would not be greater than that of national survival, or even 'regime survival'. Even if the greater power's attack is limited in its aims, and does not threaten the national or regime survival of the weak, territorial integrity is usually considered as an essential interest. As Freedman (2004) suggests, attack on sovereign territory is the attack on "the most vital of all vital issues" (p. 35). Pape also (1996) argues that deterrence is made easier by the "aggressor's handicap" – the homeland is normally more valuable to the defender than it is to the aggressor (p. 6). This is not to say, however, that, in all situations, the balance of interest would be in favor for the weak by default. In territorial disputes, for example, the aggressor may also see the disputed territory as a part of his national homeland. However, even in situations when the opponents assess the stakes more or less equally, prospect theory suggests that the overall balance of motivations would likely be in favor of the defender: "even if both value the stakes equally, the attacker, who stands to make gains, is likely to be more risk averse than the defender, who stands to suffer losses" (Pape, 1996, p. 7).

In addition, it is generally acknowledged in deterrence theory, that direct deterrence, or deterring an attack against one's territory, is considered easier and more credible than extended deterrence, or deterring an attack on an ally. As Thomas Schelling elaborates, "the difference between national homeland and everything 'abroad' is the difference between threats that are inherently credible, even if unspoken, and threats that have to be made credible" (as cited in Platias, 1994, p. 54). As well, deterrence theory suggests a distinction between 'intrinsic' and 'strategic' interests. Intrinsic interests, or the inherent value of the object or issue at stake, are considered to be more important, and, thus, more deterring, than are merely strategic interests, defined by Jervis as the "degree to which a retreat would endanger the state's position on other issues" (as cited in Freedman, 2004, p. 46). Thus, relevant to the discussion here, is the supposition that the weak state trying to deter great power would, in fact, practice the type of deterrence that is easier and more credible (i.e., direct deterrence), and would defend the interests that are more deterring (i.e., intrinsic interests).

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Summing up, in deterrence situations when the weak are trying to deter the strong, the balance of motivations would likely be in favor of the weak. Since sovereignty is usually perceived as the most vital issue at stake, it is reasonable to believe that the greater power's interests, however strategically important, would rarely match the weak state's interest at stake. As well, whereas the greater power's decision to attack, or not attack, would rarely be identified with a question of national survival, for the weak, this question looms large when facing the attack of a stronger opponent. Although, suggested here is the notion that direct deterrence is inherently more credible than extended deterrence, and that intrinsic interests are more deterring than strategic, that does not mean that the weaker state can neglect emphasizing the asymmetry of interests in bargaining strategies. Notwithstanding the inherent credibility concerning the interest and motivations, the weak would only strengthen the deterrent effect of its strategies by continually accentuating the asymmetry of issues at stake.

b.   *Reputation*

Reputation, or a "state's record of past behavior," is another principle determiner of deterrence credibility (Watman & Wilkening, 1995, p. 58). Deterrence theory suggests that the deterrer's past behavior may have important effects on the attacker's calculations. However, both in theory and in practice, the difficulty is that "reputation is intangible and difficult to measure and identify" (Freedman, 2004, p. 53). In other words, it is difficult to establish the extent to which reputation is important for deterrence success or failure. Huth (1999) appears to conclude that reputation is the least elaborated upon variable in deterrence theory. He suggests that our knowledge is limited to identifying "when reputations form and what impact they have on deterrence" (p. 44).

Concerning the importance of reputations for deterrence credibility, views vary from the assertion that the deterrer's past behavior creates strong beliefs about his behavior in the future crisis and has strong influence on the aggressor's decision whether to challenge deterrence, to the argument that reputations are largely irrelevant for deterrence outcomes, because aggressors usually pay more attention to the current specificities (e.g., balance of military capabilities, issues at stake, and signals received from the deterrer), and do not think that the past behavior is a reliable predictor of future

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behavior.[20] Huth (1999) concludes that empirical evidence does not strongly support any of these views (pp. 41-43). He suggests that reputation is limited in its effects, and that the deterrer's past behavior in the conflicts with other states has no significant impact on deterrence outcomes in many deterrence situations (p. 42). However, he says, reputational influences can be important (p. 43). Huth proposes an intermediate position – "reputations can form and be important but only under certain conditions" (p. 33). Most likely, reputations are important when they contradict the aggressor's assessment of case-specific variables, and when they arise from the past record of interactions between the same deterrer and aggressor. As well, reputations that are important tend to be formed within the same geographic region, and may have important effects on the aggressor's calculations, only for a relatively short period of time (because of the changes in strategic environment, leadership changes, etc.) (Huth, 1999). Likewise, Lieberman (1995) suggests that only 'specific reputations' (or reputations that are context dependant) are important. "New situations give rise to new uncertainties. Specific reputations developed in other situations are irrelevant to the new circumstances" (Lieberman, 1995, p. 30).

Following the logic of these inferences, this thesis also proposes that in unconventional deterrence, only context dependent reputations would likely have an important impact on the aggressor's calculations. Most probably, if the aggressor has already lost a guerrilla war against the same deterrer, reputation would have the strongest effect for the credibility of unconventional deterrence. For example, if Vietnam or Lebanon employed unconventional deterrence against the US and Israel, respectively, there would be a high probability that the deterrers' reputations would influence the calculations of potential aggressors. On the other hand, if the deterrer has been crushingly defeated in a conventional war against the same potential attacker, the credibility of unconventional deterrence, probably, would not be greatly influenced by the reputation of a "miserable" conventional force's performance on the battlefield. The deterrer may, rather, exploit this shift of defensive strategies to his own advantage, by emphasizing his strategic adaptability, and learning the "lessons-learned." The established reputations of national cohesion and nationalistic fervor may also have an effect on the aggressor's

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[20] See Huth (1997) for a detail discussion on reputations. Concerning reputations' impact on deterrence outcome, Huth (1999) identifies three views: strong-interdependence-of-commitments position; qualified-interdependence-of-commitments position; and case-specific-credibility position.

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calculation, since guerrilla warfare is dependent on the active and passive support of populations. Concerning the retaliatory terrorist strikes, the reputation of the deterrer's leadership, as being associated with some terrorist activities in the past, would likely diminish the aggressor's belief that the deterrer may be not be willing to respond to aggression with terrorist strikes. However, shifts in strategic environment could make the deterrer's reputations concerning unconventional war irrelevant, to some extent. For example, if the aggressor believes that he has developed a good counter-insurgency, and counter-terrorism techniques, the significance of a deterrer's reputation, specific to unconventional deterrence, may decrease in aggressor's calculations.

c.   *Bargaining Strategy*

In deterrence theory, bargaining strategy is considered to be a component of deterrence credibility. The general assertion, according to Lieberman, is "that the crisis-bargaining-behavior of the defender influences deterrence outcomes" (Lieberman, 1995, p. 31). Huth (1999) defines a deterrer's bargaining behavior as being a function of conveying signals to the aggressor about the deterrer's interests at stake, intentions, and resolve (p. 37). However, views differ considerably regarding the extent to which bargaining strategies are important for deterrence outcome. While Watman and Wilkening (1995) appear to see bargaining tactics as a lesser factor, which simply amplifies the perception of interests and reputations (p. 60), Huth (1999) argues that "the studies of crisis bargaining indicate that military or diplomatic actions of defenders can have strong effects on whether deterrence succeeds or fails" (p. 37).

In brief, concerning particular bargaining behavior, Huth (1988, 1999) concludes that "firm-but-flexible" bargaining strategies and "tit-for-tat" military policies are more effective as deterrents than either more aggressive and intransigent, or very cautious and conciliatory diplomatic and military stance. As well, inclusion of positive inducements can increase the likelihood of deterrence success, according to Huth: "diplomatic policies that include flexibility and a willingness to compromise and negotiate on secondary issue, combined with a refusal to concede on vital security, increase the likelihood of deterrence success" (Huth, 1999, p. 38). Overall, Huth (1999) suggests that "Schelling's school" of the manipulation of risk, inflexible commitment,

and "costly" signals strategies, have not been fully supported by empirical evidence, and that the "carrot-and-stick" approach, or combination threats and positive inducements, increases the likelihood of successful deterrence.

In regard to unconventional deterrence, there is no evidence to suggest that bargaining behavior should be somehow conceptually different. That is to say, that the role of bargaining strategies in unconventional deterrence is the same – as a means to signal interests, intentions, and resolve for an aggressor. Because unconventional threats are not so impressive and self-evident, clearly conveying threats to the opponent may have a strong effect for deterrence outcome. As well, some kind of flexibility, reassurance, and willingness to compromise on secondary issues, if situation allows, would presumably increase the deterrent effect of overall unconventional deterrence strategy.

d.   *Legitimacy*

Legitimacy is not considered as being a determinant of deterrence outcome in deterrence theory, and is rarely discussed by deterrence theoreticians. Watman and Wilkening (1995), one of those exceptions, see legitimacy as a facet of credibility, also agreeing that legitimacy is a lesser factor, and difficult to determine (p. 60). Notwithstanding this disregard for legitimacy, it will be discussed, briefly, in this study, because of the perception of illegitimate aspects of some unconventional deterrence threats (e.g., assassinations of politico-military leadership), and terrorism in particular. However, it must be acknowledged that legitimacy is a complex phenomenon of international relations, and the line between legitimate and illegitimate is not so clear-cut. Concerning terrorism, the problem goes beyond international law and, in essence, touches the just war theory, and the principles of *jus in bello* and *jus ad bellum*. Therefore, the present study stays within the limits of the question as how legitimacy can affect deterrence credibility, and does not discuss whether terrorism, as such, or targeting civilians, in general (thus, the problem goes even beyond terrorism), can be a "just" warfighting technique.

In general, deterrence theory considers legitimacy, only in the light of credibility. In other words, it does not matter whether interests or means are legitimate, as such. Legitimacy becomes important only when it can impair credibility – if the

aggressor believes that the deterrer thinks about his defended interest as being illegitimate, the aggressor can discount the threats, expecting that the deterrer may back down after the attack, and not implement the threats. Watman and Wilkening (1995) suggest that deterrence credibility does not require that the opponents would share this perception of legitimacy. All that is required, is that the aggressor believes the deterrer holds his belief about legitimacy of his interests and means (p. 61). In other words, the deterrer does not need to convince the aggressor about the legitimacy of the deterrer's defended interests, or used means for deterrence to be credible. The deterrer only needs to convince the aggressor that the deterrer believes his interests and means are legitimate. Therefore, in unconventional deterrence, the problem is not that some defending methods are illegitimate, *per se*, but how the weak can convey the message that they treat these defensive methods as legitimate, and the implementation of threats will not be impaired.

Watman and Wilkening (1995) identify two elements that can be perceived as being either legitimate or illegitimate – i.e., a deterrer's interests and methods of defense (p. 60). Concerning the deterrer's interests in direct deterrence, it seems that the attacker would rarely believe that the deterrer perceives his interests as being illegitimate. Since sovereignty is an entrenched principle in international relations, and the defense of national territory is considered to be a vital interest, it would be unreasonable for the aggressor to believe that the deterrer considers his interests illegitimate. In addition, defense of the status quo is associated with legitimacy, *per se*. In contrast, attackers bear the burden of disturbing the status quo (Pape, 1996, p. 6). What is important for unconventional deterrence, is that the weak can exploit this inherent legitimacy of interests to balance, to some extent, the perceived illegitimacy of defensive means, and, thereby, to convince the aggressor that the deterrer believes his defensive means are legitimate. In other words, by stressing that the deterrer sees as legitimate all defensive means (be they nuclear strikes, terrorism, or any other technique) to protect the legitimate interest, sovereignty and status quo, he may diminish the aggressor's doubts that threats are going to be implemented.

Concerning the legitimacy of defensive mechanisms in unconventional deterrence, the problem is more complicated. It may be reasonable for the aggressor to believe that the perceived illegitimacy of defensive means can handicap the

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implementation of threats. However, even at this point of time, it appears that some weak states (e.g., Iran, Sudan) could easily convince the potential aggressor that they would retaliate by terrorist strikes in response to attacks on their homelands. Because of their leadership reputations, associations with terrorist activities in the past, and, apparently, not so rigid approach to terrorism as a fighting technique, the aggressor would likely believe that the threats would be implemented notwithstanding their connotation with illegitimacy. Other weak states may emphasize the defensive, in contrast to offensive, use of terrorism in their public diplomacy, in order to diminish the negative connotation. Punitive retaliation by terrorist acts, in fact, is conceptually the same as counter-value strategies in nuclear deterrence. In both cases, the targets are civilian populations. Thus, weak states could emphasize that their deterrence strategies function in the same way as that of greater powers. In other words, public diplomacy could question why the weak should be limited in their defensive strategies while the stronger can target civilians in their strategies. The question could be stressed, what is more illegitimate and unethical – vast damage of nuclear strikes, or limited destruction of terrorist strikes? On the other hand, if the weak state, itself, doubts the legitimacy of terrorist threats or/and finds it difficult to convince an aggressor that the threats will be implemented, notwithstanding that the aggressor perceives them as illegitimate, the weak could concentrate their deterrence efforts on denial (by guerrilla warfare) as a primary strategy of unconventional deterrence.

III.   SMALL WAR PHENOMENON

You know you never defeated us on the battlefield," said the American colonel.

The North Vietnamese colonel pondered this remark a moment. "That may be so," he replied, "but it is also irrelevant.

Conversation in Hanoi, April 1975[21]

The Iraq War of 2003, once again, has raised the "small war" phenomenon to the fore. Although it is too early to make general conclusions, or speculate about what has been called "the second Vietnam," it is, apparently, evident that the world's only superpower, the U.S., has had difficulties in realizing its aims and, thus, ending the war.

History suggests that even underdogs sometimes do win wars against considerably superior belligerents. One could argue that that is just a matter of accident, the result of a Clausewitzian "fog of war." However, it seems that too many examples of this may have occurred – for instance, the Peninsular War, the Algerian war of 1954-62, the Vietnam War of 1964-73, the Afghanistan War of 1979-89, the Lebanon war of 1982-83, the Chechnya War of 1994-96, etc., to ignore this as being a paradoxical phenomenon. On the other hand, and more typically, there are plenty of counter-examples, i.e., where the weak have lost wars, occasionally with their population even being exterminated. However, these cases conform to the "iron rule of power." What seems counterintuitive (due to overall Western predominance) is that in the 20th century "underdogs seem to have done rather well in small wars" (Merom, 2003, p. 4). This same idea has also been observed by Ivan Arreguín-Toft (2001), who infers that weak actors are increasingly winning asymmetric conflicts (p. 99).

As mentioned above, some theoreticians of small wars have been trying to determine the dynamics of small wars.[22] In other words, the question is whether there exists some logic, or determinants, behind this seemingly paradoxical phenomenon – i.e.,

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[21] Conversation on 25 April 1975 in Hanoi between Colonel Harry G. Summers, Jr. and Colonel Tu. As cited in Summers, 1995, p. 1.

an underdog's victory over a stronger opponent. Concerning unconventional deterrence, in general, and deterrence by the weak, in particular, the small war phenomenon matters in two ways. First, if an underdog's victory in war against the strong does not have any basis in logic, and appears to be only an incidental aberration, unconventional deterrence would seem to be very problematic. That is to say, it would be unreliable to threaten the strong, in order to deny him his objectives (at least with particular types of resistance), if underdog victories are accidental, rather than being a predictable result. Second, insights from discussions on small wars can suggest a number of conditions that may influence the outcome of unconventional deterrence – ones that can either be created by the weak, or that are intrinsic to the deterree (and the international system in which the opponents interact).

A.   APPROACHES TO THE SMALL WAR PHENOMENON

1.   Realism and Structuralism

The small war phenomenon is rather illogical, in itself – i.e., the notion that underdogs can prevail in conflicts against antagonists who are superior, in every respect. Victories by underdogs are a paradox for realism, particularly (Merom, 2003, p. 5). The idea that the weak are able to win against the strong seriously deflates the realist argument that power, defined in terms of military capabilities, in particular, and economic resources, in general, determines who wins and who loses. Since Thucydides, the fundamental principle of international relations has been that "power implies victory in war" (Arreguín-Toft, 2001, p. 94). In the orthodox mindset, the underdog's victory would mean that he is not an underdog any more. It is interesting to note that, on the balance of military capabilities, the emphasis of deterrence theory fits entirely into the logic of realism.

The most feasible explanation of small wars, fitting this balance-of-power paradigm of realism theory, is both an over-extension of power, as well as an omen signaling the decline of hegemony. According to Robert Gilpin, hegemons expand to the

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22 A plethora of terms, such as asymmetric war, low-intensity conflict, military operations other than war, 4th generation war, etc., is used alternatively with the concept of small war. However, these appear to be much broader concepts than we discuss. For the purpose of this paper, we borrow Merom's (2003) definition: "A small war has the following characteristics: It involves sharp military asymmetry, an insurgent that fights guerrilla war, and an incumbent that uses ground forces for counterinsurgency warfare. The incumbent can be an indigenous government that fights on its own or with external participation, or a foreign power that imposes itself on the population" (p. 4).

point when costs exceed benefits (as cited in Merom, 2003, p. 6). Paul Kennedy appears to take the same view, and warns that "imperial over-extension" is the greatest risk to the United States, because, even such an enormous power, lacks the capacity to deploy her troops to dozens of hot-spots throughout the world – e.g., Iraq; Afghanistan; likely, to Liberia; Iran; Syria; and North Korea (as cited in Follath, 2003). Although this argument does not contemplate small wars, in particular, it does imply that overextension of power permits the weak "to create a favorable balance of power in their vicinity" (Merom, 2003, p. 6).

Another approach to small wars, closely connected with the perspective of the balance-of-power paradigm, follows structuralist argumentation – i.e., that a great power should be prepared to defend its status and interests against other would-be great powers. That is to say, great powers cannot afford to allocate a large part of their efforts to wars that do not threaten their survival, and cannot generate major systemic changes in the international system. According to Robert M. Cassidy (2002), "great powers do not win small wars because they are great powers: their militaries must maintain a central competence in symmetric warfare to preserve their great-power status vis-à-vis other great powers" (p. 14). For example, one of the explanations why the US and the Soviet Union failed in their "major" small wars – i.e., the US in Vietnam, and the Soviet Union in Afghanistan – is that, during the Cold War, both superpowers had to concentrate their resources on the nuclear arms race and conventional wars on the plains of Europe. In other words, great powers have to embrace a big-war paradigm by necessity (Cassidy, 2003, p. v). Structuralism suggests that, the great power's position in the international system, inherently creates tensions between its allocation of resources. However, the priority will always be placed on readiness to counter would-be great powers, rather than on dealing with skirmishes in the peripheral zones of the international system.

Both the balance-of-power paradigm and the structuralism approach especially stress the relevance of overextension-of-power and structural-constraint arguments during major, or systemic, wars. That is to say, great powers need to concentrate their resources and efforts on other strong antagonists during their major wars, thus making the guerrillas' struggle more efficient in non-major war areas. From this point of view,

Napoleon gave up Spain because he needed his forces for the invasion of Russia. For the same reason, guerrillas in the Balkans successfully resisted Hitler's forces; and Britain gave up their American colonies, due to troubles elsewhere (Merom, 2003, p. 6).

Although these arguments of an over-extension of power and structural constraints cannot explain the small war phenomenon by themselves, their insights may be relevant for unconventional deterrence, at least, in theory. First, unconventional deterrence, most probably, would seem most feasible when a strong warring nation faces a dozen other "hot spots" throughout its zones of influence, and perceives its military capabilities as being on the edge of being overextended. Bearing in mind the efficiency of guerrilla tactics in tieing down much larger conventional units, or in protracting a conflict, and in preventing stronger opponents from ending a war in just several decisive blows, it is reasonable to suggest that guerrilla resistance would work better as a deterrent if the strong followed a strategy of concentrating its forces on one "hot spot," i.e., dealing with just one conflict decisively, and only then moving on to the next. Second, if the greater power faces other would-be great powers, i.e. those which want to challenge the former conventionally, unconventional deterrence by the weak likely would work better, because the stronger opponent would not be able to concentrate his resources and efforts on the small war with the weaker opponent. In fact, this notion rests on the argument that a big-war paradigm (or large, mechanized conventional forces oriented towards greater firepower) is not the best means to fight small wars. Hence, if the great power needs to adopt a big-war paradigm due to necessity, the weak may maximize the deterrent effect of its forces by concentrating on a different type of resistance.

2.   The Interaction-of-Strategies Argument

The majority of analyses regarding small wars may be subsumed by the over-all pattern of counter-insurgency theory. Students of counter-insurgencies, approach the problem by asking why strong actors fail to win small wars. In other words, small wars are not lost. They are not won. The general conclusion is that great powers do not manage to employ appropriate means in dealing with insurgencies. Some of the main reasons why overwhelmingly superior forces, both militarily and socio-economically, usually fail to convert their advantages in small wars are: malfunctioning military doctrine, failed

strategies, poor military and/or political leadership, non-coordination of military and political affairs. As mentioned above, the big-war approach is usually pointed out as counter-productive in dealing with guerrilla resistance.

Arreguín-Toft's (2001) research on the interaction between opponents' strategies in small wars appears to summarize the approach of many studies on counter-insurgencies when he says, "strong actors lose asymmetric conflicts when they adopt the wrong strategy vis-à-vis their weaker adversaries" (p. 121). Arreguín-Toft (2001) argues that when strong actors attack with a direct strategy (i.e., using a conventional approach) and weak opponents defend themselves indirectly (i.e., by using guerrilla tactics), all other things being equal, weak actors should win. On the other hand, if both opponents approach the other indirectly, strong states should win (pp. 108-109). However, although this explanation, as such, is acceptable for counter-insurgency experts, it is not so clear as to what constitutes the indirect approach of a strong actor. Arreguín-Toft identifies the indirect approach as barbarism, or as a systematic violation of the laws of war, which ranges from the cruelest means (e.g., concentration camps, targeted assassinations of non-combatants, torture, etc.), to the softest ones (such as replacement of hamlets, deforestation, etc.). "Barbarism works as a COIN [i.e., counter-insurgency] strategy because by attacking either or both of the essential elements of GWS [i.e., guerrilla warfare strategy] – sanctuary and social assistance – it destroys an adversaries capacity to fight" (Arreguín-Toft, 2001, p. 19). Merom (2003) also endorses this argument by suggesting that "all things being equal, the readiness of strong powers to escalate the level of brutality is the key to winning small wars" (p. 48). On the other hand, both authors appear to agree that barbarism or brutality can be effective only as a military means, but backfires if the desired objective is long-term, political control. Thus, Arreguín-Toft (2001) ends his study by drawing this controversial conclusion: "Barbarism thus sacrifices victory in peace for victory in war – a poor policy at best" (p. 123).

Although it is reasonable to conclude that small wars are lost because a wrong strategy/approach was adopted, the complex relationship between the possibility of escalating violence and the ability to win a small war suggests that it is difficult to find an "indirect approach" that would determine the victory of the strong in small wars, all other

things being equal. Notwithstanding the profusion of analysis of small wars, and broadly agreed-upon principles of a successful counter-insurgency strategy,[23] guerrilla resistance remains difficult to deal with, not only in practice, but also in theory. Overall, Arreguín-Toft (2001) finds that "the strategic interaction thesis suggests that weak adversaries employing an indirect defense will be difficult to defeat" (p. 122). Lord (1995) puts it in a more mundane manner: "there can be little question that the counterinsurgency is a difficult one for soldiers under the best circumstances" (p. 93). Hence, for unconventional deterrence (and weak states), the implication appears to be straightforward: if one agrees that guerrilla warfare is a form of resistance that even a considerably superior enemy would find difficult to fight and defeat, it is logical to suggest that by concentrating on guerrilla resistance, the weak would likely increase the deterrent effect of their defensive strategies.

3. Effectiveness of Guerrilla Warfare

In fact, the argument for the effectiveness of guerrilla warfare is closely associated with the above discussed interaction-of-strategies approach. However, the counter-insurgency and the effectiveness of guerrilla warfare approaches look at the small war phenomenon from different angles. While the latter suggests that the strong failed to adopt the right strategies, the former argues that guerrilla warfare is inherently effective as a military tactic, and difficult to beat. Such arguments reached a peak in 1950s and 60s, when it was often assumed, based on historical data, that insurgents were likely to be successful (Beckett, 2001, p. viii). As Colonel Nemo stated, speaking at some point during that time: "the regular armies have almost never succeeded in gaining the ascendancy over guerrilla operations of any importance" (as cited in Laqueur, 1998, p. 390). Even one of the explanations of the US failure in Vietnam is the argument that the war was unwinnable due to "guerrilla tactic, a type of warfare that is virtually impossible to defeat" (Boot, 2002, p. 314). In military terms, the effectiveness of guerrilla warfare usually is explained by the ability of small and lightly armed units to tie down large numbers of their enemy's troops by avoiding direct confrontation for a considerable

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[23] For example, Ian F. W. Beckett (2001) identifies six elements of a successful counter-insurgency strategy: the recognition of the need for a political rather than a purely military solution; the necessity for complete civil-military cooperation; the necessity for a coordinated intelligence effort; the need to split active insurgents from their supporters; the use of appropriate military measures; and the need for a long term political efforts (p. 22).

period of time. Simply put, far more soldiers are necessary for guard duty on a bridge to protect it than are needed to blow it up (Laqueur, 1998, p. 275). According to Camille Rougeron (1982), a French military theoretician, "the effectiveness of guerrilla warfare is uncontestable" (p. 51).

Because of the ability to resist and counteract superior forces, guerrilla warfare has been commonly considered to be the weapon of choice by the weak, or, in other words, "classic 'poor man's war'" (Beckett, 2001, pix). Merom (2003) displays the advantages of guerrilla warfare for the weak, vis-à-vis conventional warfare of pitched battles, by comparing the burdens associated with both types of resistance:

> In conventional warfare, armies seek to marshal their forces for decisive battles. They therefore rely on a great deal of logistic support, fixed bases, and a few wide supply lines. These require a great deal of centralization investment of material and human resources in infrastructure, and its defensive maintenance. Ultimately, these offer good targets, particularly for the militarily superior side. Guerrilla warfare, by relying on small independent formations, and on supply and shelter from an existing, widely decentralized infrastructure – the general population – can avoid much of the burden, as well as a single knockout blow. (p. 34)

In turn, Merom (2003) states that "guerrilla warfare turns out to be the only form of violent resistance that has any chance of surviving repeated encounters with a military superior oppressor" (p. 33).

Another peculiarity of guerrilla conflict is nicely reflected in H. Kissinger's (1969) maxim: "The guerrilla wins if he does not lose. The conventional army loses if it does not win." Putting it simply, the weak, resisting by guerrilla warfare, just need not lose, while the aggressor has to win, because, usually, he cannot sustain operations indefinitely. Time, thus, is always on the guerrillas' side. Kissinger's maxim appears to suggest that in military terms, the goal of guerrilla resistance is even less ambitious than that in the traditional interpretation of guerrilla warfare: to win, guerrillas do not need to exhaust the aggressor's capacity to fight but only wear down his will. In other words, emphasis is put more on the political aspect of guerrilla warfare than on military.

For weak states, this approach to small wars seems to suggest several points. First, guerrilla warfare is operationally effective: it requires only limited resources, can tie down considerably larger numbers of the enemy's troops, does not offer easy targets for the superior opponent, and cannot be defeated with a single, or even several, decisive blows. More importantly, guerrilla warfare appears to be the only option that provides some chance to resist successfully against the opponent who is superior in every respect. In turn, if the weak state considers deterring the strong by denial, adopting a guerrilla warfare strategy would likely have a higher deterrent effect than preparing to defend the territory conventionally, simply because in the latter case, the victory of the strong appears to be preordained.

4.   Asymmetry of Interests and Will

One of the most elaborated upon dynamics of small wars draws attention to the asymmetrical relationship between belligerents. The underdog's victory is often primarily a function of an asymmetry of interests. Andrew Mack (1983) argues that the asymmetry of interests and capabilities is often the starting point in the causal mechanism of small wars. While underdogs usually fight for survival, great powers often have just peripheral interests at stake, and usually enter into a conflict with only limited objectives in mind. It is interesting to note that Mack appears to suggest that, the balance of capabilities functions differently in small wars than it does in systemic wars. In small wars, the overwhelming mismatch in capabilities reinforces the asymmetry of interests, because underdogs do not have capabilities for invading great powers, and their survival is usually not threatened, at all. In turn, the asymmetry of interests determines the political vulnerability of opponents. Inevitably, the greater the mismatch in capabilities, the greater the asymmetry of interests, the more politically vulnerable is the great power. In small wars, according to Mack, underdogs successfully annihilate the political capability, or will, of great powers, rather than their superior military capabilities.

Some motivational approaches on the other hand, put more emphasis on the significance of various intangibles, or will, than on, more or less, "perceptible" interests. Although an antagonist's will is usually derived from its interests, "faith in a dream" (using Bell's (1999) words) sometimes may be quite distinct from clear interests. From the motivationalist perspective, the victories of underdogs can be explained in terms of

"soft" power – i.e., faith, national cohesion, readiness to sacrifice, cost tolerance, etc. The assertion is that "will does count" (Bell, 1999, p. 170). Insurgents win wars because the balance of will favors them. While the strategic theory of great powers emphasizes war power based on the ability to inflict harm, the strategic theory of the guerrilla is based on his willingness to suffer (Rosen, 1972, p. 168). As J. Bowyer Bell (1999) notes, "more does not assure triumph, for if there is not will at the center then all the things the men in nifty uniforms, the money in the bank and the materials, the helicopters and hospitals and electronic gear, will not matter" (p. 170).

R. Thompson and M. Howard emphasize, in particular, the significance of the social strength of underdogs in small wars (as cited in Merom, 2003, p. 10). What is of high importance is that great powers, imposing themselves on other nations, appear to strengthen the cohesion of underdogs. As Bell (1999) suggests, "Enemies are necessary to the faith" (p. 172). In fact, that explains why it has been so difficult for invading powers to win the "hearts and minds" of the indigenous people. As well, this seems to be connected with the view that guerrilla wars tend to be most effective when they make appeals to national resistance or the desire for independence (Liddell Hart, 1968, p. 349). Laqueur (1977) also finds that for guerrilla movements, "it has been infinitely easier to succeed against foreigners, however strong, than against native incumbents, however ineffective" (p. 6).

In fact, the argument that the dynamics of small wars are a function of an asymmetry of interests and will is connected with the assertion that the balance of motivations matters for deterrence success. For weak states, this approach would suggest emphasizing the interests at stake, and the will to protect these interests in deterrence strategies, while pointing out the political vulnerability of the great powers to long, protracted, and unwinnable guerrilla wars.

5.   Democracies and Small Wars

Another argument about the dynamics of small wars refers to the political system of a warring great power. As Stephen P. Rosen argues, the social structure of the political unit can affect its ability to generate military power (as cited in Lwin, 1997, p. 17). Concerning small wars, the common argument is that democracies are cost-sensitive and fight small wars rather badly. In contrast, authoritarian political systems are less

susceptible to internal and external opposition (Mack, 1983, p. 192) and, therefore, tend to perform better in small wars. Merom takes this argument of the importance of the political system further, concluding that the domestic structure of the warring strong power is the primary determinant of the outcome of small wars. In other words, democracies tend to lose small wars at home (Merom, 2003, p. 26).

Merom (2003) constructs a theoretical model, explaining the process by which democratic states lose small wars, in spite of their military superiority. Putting it simply, as an insurgency becomes protracted (i.e., because of guerrilla warfare), casualties of war increasingly become unacceptable for the educated middle class, which doubts the expedience of war. This, in turn, starts to influence the politico-military decisions on the battlefield – i.e., the incumbent starts using less discriminate and higher violence in order to produce tangible and quicker results. Growing brutality, on the other hand, raises doubts about the morality of war, which, in turn, starts being depicted as threatening the very foundations of democracy, and the identity of the warring state, itself. Thus, the center of gravity often shifts from the battlefield to domestic discussions. In sum, democracies are seldom able to find the balance between expedience and morality in small wars.

For weak states, this approach suggests that guerrilla warfare, as a defensive strategy, would be more successful against democracies. Of course, this does not translate automatically to more reliable unconventional deterrence, unless the aggressor's leaders believe that internal opposition can prevent them from achieving their war aims further down the road. Thus, the underdog's public diplomacy, stimulating internal discussions in the strong state regarding the possibility of attack, may increase the deterrent effect of the unconventional deterrence strategy.

IV. CASE STUDIES: THE VIETNAM AND AFGHANISTAN WARS

Although the Vietnam War of 1964-73, and the Afghanistan War of 1979-89, are not directly related to unconventional deterrence, both wars are classic examples of conflicts in which guerrilla warfare played an essential role. Thus, the focus of the discussion of these case studies is on the underdogs' strategies that allowed them to protract the conflicts, make the opponents' overwhelming military superiority irrelevant, and deny the strong their political objectives. Both cases suggest that: first, adopting a guerrilla warfare strategy may compensate for an overwhelming military inferiority; and second, that having large enough short-term and/or long-term military capabilities is not the only way to protract a war and prevent an opponent from a *fait accompli* (which has been identified as a requirement for successful deterrence). In turn, both cases support the argument that the weaker opponent could increase the deterrent effects of their inferior military capabilities, vis-à-vis great powers, by adopting guerrilla warfare strategy.

A. THE VIETNAM WAR OF 1964-73

After twenty-five years of their being involved in Vietnam (i.e., from their first giving of material support to the French in 1950, to the evacuation of the US embassy in Hanoi in 1975), the US withdrew without realizing its political aims, notwithstanding its commitment of vast expeditionary forces, and overall strategic superiority. Saigon fell to the North Vietnamese communists (i.e., the Vietminh). With the cost of about 50,000 American military killed in action, 150,000 seriously wounded, and the price tag of at least $110 billion (Handel, 1981, p. 274; Beckett, 2001, p. 192), it has been said that all the US achieved "was to buy their South Vietnamese allies a few more years of political independence" (Merom, 2003, p. 232). By contrast, the underdog – i.e., the "coalition" of the North Vietnamese government and the Vietcong (the South Vietnamese guerrillas) – was able to force the opponent to terminate its military presence and curtail its material support for the South Vietnamese government and army, and finally reunify the country under Hanoi's control.

The US got involved in Vietnam incrementally, from 729 Americans assigned to Military Assistance and Advisory Group in 1954, to 541,000 military personnel in 1969. But confident that after one more escalation would cause the enemy to reach the

"breaking point," US forces believed they would be able to "stabilize" South Vietnam, and then exit (Arreguín-Toft, 2001, p. 118). According to Bell (1999), there was no reason why an American commitment would not prove effective in Vietnam, a small country that was under threat from an insurgency: "Thus, even if America faced a long war in Vietnam, both the military and strategic tools existed where the French had failed. America had the appropriate resources – an endless supply of tangible assets – to win, to turn Saigon around, to fashion an army that would in alliance pursue a war of attrition to inevitable victory" (p. 288). As Summers (1995) finds, in the Vietnam War, the US military succeeded in everything they set out to do – "on the battlefield itself, the Army was unbeatable" (p. 1). Yet, in the end, the war was lost. "The communist insurgency really did win the war. Not by defeating U.S. forces on the battlefield – but that was never its goal" (Boot, 2002, p. 316). According to Laqueur (1998), "the Communist high command was all along aware that military victory against Americans was ruled out; the strategic aim was therefore to make the war so costly for the United States that it would tire and withdraw" (p. 276).

After the French retreated from Indochina, and the Geneva accords partitioned Vietnam into two countries, with Ho Chi Minh in control of North Vietnam and vague allusions to common elections in 1956, the Vietminh apparently focused on consolidating their rule over the North Vietnam for the next several years. However, guerrilla war in the South never ceased, entirely, and began increasing, gradually, from 1957 (Laqueur, 1998, p. 270). Hanoi had a foothold in the South from the very beginning of the insurgency – about 6,000 Vietminh fighters, who remained in the South after the partition (Laqueur, 1998, p. 274). They were engaging in propaganda campaigns early on, and used mainly discriminate terror tactics, such as assassinations of teachers and administrators, and public "trials" and executions of village officials (Asprey, 1994, p. 618). Joes (1996) reports, that between 1954 and 1958, they murdered about 20 percent of South Vietnam's village chiefs and schoolteachers (p. 102). After the Vietminh officially decided to resume their armed struggle in the South to reunify the country in 1959, the South Vietnamese communists, who had been evacuated to the North after the Geneva accords, began infiltrating South Vietnam, to organize an infrastructure for guerrilla war (Boot, 2002, p. 287). According to Bell (1999), by 1959, Hanoi had taken

over the direction of the Vietcong in the South (p. 284). The small-scale infiltration of regular North Vietnamese Army (NVA) troops followed, and guerrilla attacks intensified. After the naval incident in the Gulf of Tonkin in 1964, the US retaliated with limited air strikes against North Vietnam, which turned into a prolonged bombing campaign. In March 1965, the first ground combat troops landed, providing security for an American airbase. By that time, the number of regular North Vietnamese soldiers who had been dispatched to the South was estimated at 38,000, and the Vietcong numbered at least 220,000 (Boot, 2002, p. 294). The US military presence also grew at a similar pace – to 389,000 in 1966 (Bell, 1999, p296).

It is interesting to note, as Laqueur (1998) does, that the North Vietnamese, in contrast to other guerrilla campaigns, were in a position early on in their war to set up a regular army that was relatively well-equipped and combat-experienced (p. 262). However, they did not launch an outright invasion of the South. Having in mind the US commitment to South Vietnam, it seems that the Vietminh realized, from the very beginning, that fighting a conventional war of pitched battles against a superior enemy would inevitably result in their defeat. Instead, the NVA regulars and Vietcong guerrillas used, essentially, classic guerrilla "hit-and-run" tactics (e.g., ambushes, laying mines, and raids on airfields, military bases, and police outposts). Nor did they agree to fight on the enemy's terms, i.e., in large-scale engagements, with the exception of several conventional offensives, which proved to be militarily disastrous for the NVA and Vietcong (discussed below in the text). Boot (2002) states that "the American forces seldom managed to pin down enough of the Vietcong to bring their overwhelming firepower to bear" (p. 298). By dispersing and disappearing in jungles, the NVA and Vietcong guerrillas made large-unit, search-and-destroy missions largely ineffective. When guerrillas chose to fight, they used some irregular tactics (e.g., extensive tunnel systems [Bell, 1999, pp. 299-308]), or closed so tightly with the enemy's formations that close air and artillery support, was risky because of eventual "friendly" casualties. Yet, the Vietcong and NVA retained initiative and forced the US and South Vietnamese troops to fight on the guerrillas' terms. As one official study reported, by 1967, 88 percent of all engagements were initiated by the NVA and Vietcong (Beckett, 2001, p. 90).

Likewise, "air strikes against the Vietcong were not decisive either, because the enemy was usually not visible" (Laqueur, 1998, p. 275). Bell (1999) estimates each killed enemy "cost" 75 bombs and 150 artillery shells for the US (p. 297). According to some accounts, the Vietcong fighters even managed to make aerial bombardments counterproductive by directing them onto civilian targets. By deliberately demonstrating their presence in some villages, they provoked air strikes or artillery shelling. However, by the time the bombing started, they had slipped away, thus, leaving only non-combatants to suffer the effects of the bombing.

Relentless air attacks on the supply lines of the Ho Chi Minh Trail did not have decisive effects either: bombing did not stop the flow of supplies and infiltration of fighters. The US frustration with the Ho Chi Minh Trail exemplifies how focusing on the warfare that does not depend on vast logistic lines and uninterrupted flows of supplies, can significantly diminish the utility of greater firepower in attacks on supply lines. Beckett (2001) suggests that "NVA and Vietcong units required few supplies since they were not engaged in continuous combat operations" (p. 190). Boot (2002) also states that vast amounts of munitions expended to close the supply lines were futile because Vietcong did not need much aid from the North. In 1965, the Vietcong (numbering 220,000 by 1965, according to Boot) needed only 12 tons of supplies a day, which could be carried in 15 pickup trucks (p. 295). That is not to suggest, though, that guerrilla warfare does not need logistic supplies, at all. However, the low scale of logistic supplies needed for guerrilla warfare may considerably decrease the possibility that the strong could make a quick and decisive impact on the outcome of war by attacking supply lines.

Although low-intensity guerrilla warfare was the pivotal aspect of the NVA and Vietcong strategy, it was not the only one. The intensity of war fluctuated. As prescribed by the "orthodox" guerrilla warfare doctrine, the NVA and Vietcong, on occasion, gathered their troops for smaller or larger scale "phase III",[24] or conventional, attacks. However, the common outcome of these pitched battles – the "American battlefield triumph" (using Bell's words (1999, p. 318)) – rather supports the argument that defeat is

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[24] Mao identifies three phases of insurgency, or "people's war": Phase I - building extensive political support and underground networks; Phase II – launching protracted guerrilla struggle; Phase III – developing of regular units, which, in conjunction with popular uprising, will finally overrun an enemy's forces. See on Mao revolutionary experience, for example, Beckett (2001, pp. 70-86).

the invariable result when the weak fight on the superior opponent's terms. Arreguín-Toft (2001) states that in a sequence of pitched battles between NVA regular units and those of the US and South Vietnamese that lasted throughout the war, "the US forces proved overwhelmingly successful at destroying North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and Vietcong (VC) main-force units" (p. 115). According to Beckett (2001), Giap repeated his errors by launching premature conventional offensives, which exposed the Vietminh to the full weight of the opponents' firepower (p. 90). The Tet Offensive of 1968, a massive NVA and Vietcong attack on the major towns and cities in the South done simultaneously, proved to be a major military defeat of the Vietminh. "Hanoi had made a major strategic error in opting for a relatively conventional attack by light-infantry on the core areas of ARVN and American strength" (Bell, 1999, p. 313). Although, the attackers achieved some initial successes, quickly the initiative passed to Saigon and the US, and in a few weeks, the NVA and Vietcong were pushed back. The Communists lost about 50,000 fighters as killed in action. The Vietcong was virtually destroyed as a fighting force (Boot, 2002, p. 308), never to be as effectively recreated (Bell, 1999, p. 315). Ironically, the Tet Offensive had a profound impact on the American public, who had believed that the war was being won by the US. The major Vietcong and NVA defeat, and the US military victory, turned out to be the turning point in the war: the US policy shifted to the 'peace with honor' and 'Vietnamisation' policy, which, in fact, was a gradual de-escalation and withdrawal. Although Tet turned out to be a victory for Hanoi, after all, and Hanoi very quickly recognized and exploited it, Giap and Ho Chi Minh had not foreseen such a favorable return from the Tet Offensive (Bell, 199, 315).

The majority of the subsequent, main-unit engagements between the NVA and the US forces also demonstrated the same pattern – i.e., superior firepower prevailed over the underdog in the battlefield. In the second round of the Tet Offensive in May 1968 and in the siege of Khe Shan, US conventional power triumphed (Bell, 1999, p. 318). The Eastern Offensive of 1972 demonstrated the crucial effects of the US air power on the conventional battlefield: Giap's offensive was destroyed, mainly by air power (Joes, 1996, p. 103; Beckett, 2001, p. 192). True, in 1975, South Vietnam fell after the North

Vietnamese all-out conventional offensive. However, with the US ground troops and air support withdrawn, and material support critically curtailed, the North communists were no longer an underdog.

Mack (1983) draws several conclusions from the Vietnam War, which, by any "conventional" logic, the United States should have won. First, superiority in military force (i.e., conventionally defined) does not guarantee victory, and may even be counterproductive. Second, the theater of war may extend, under certain circumstances, beyond the battlefield, to encompass the social and political institutions of the invading power. Finally, the Vietnam War emphasized the enormous importance that guerrilla strategists place on "protracted warfare" (pp. 177-178). In fact, all of these inferences appear to be interdependent. To protract a war against a superior enemy is possible only by making his military superiority irrelevant, to some degree. In turn, only if an enemy is precluded from achieving a quick and decisive victory, can a weaker side count upon gradually eroding the political capability of a warring power to persist in war. Concerning the Vietnam War, the North's guerrilla warfare strategy made it possible for the Vietminh to counteract the US's superiorities, protract the war, and, in turn, wear down the US political will, rather than its military capabilities. The North Vietnamese Army and the Vietcong concentrated primarily on conducting a low-intensity, guerrilla war, and, just on occasion, gathered their troops for smaller or larger scale conventional attacks, which proved to be not the best military moves of Hanoi. Although we have to acknowledge that many other factors played in the Vietnam War (such as the extremely high motivation of the Vietminh communists to suffer, the flawed US counterinsurgency doctrine (presumably), self-limitation of the US not to invade North Vietnam, Soviet and Chinese material support to the North, vulnerability of the South to infiltration from Laos and Cambodia, etc.), these do not disprove the effectiveness of low-intensity guerrilla warfare as a weapon of the weak vis-à-vis conventional warfare of pitched battles.

B.   THE AFGHANISTAN WAR OF 1979-89

The Afghanistan war – often referred to as "Russia's Vietnam" – provides a classic textbook study "of how a major power can fail to win a war against guerrillas" (Joes, 1996, p. 119). After ten years of fighting in Afghanistan (1979-89), the Soviets did not achieve their objectives: shore up the client regime, consolidate communist influence,

and institutionalize the presence of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. "Despite a favorable strategic position and overwhelming advantages in material and technology, the Soviet Armed Forces achieved no better than a military stalemate against poorly equipped, disunited, but fiercely resistant *mujahedin*" (McMichael, 2002, p. 270). The *mujahedin* (i.e., "holy warriors") resistance succeeded in making the continued occupation of the country too costly and imposing military stalemate (Joes, 1996, p. 121). Notwithstanding the tragicomic disparity in wealth and military power (Joes, 1996, p. 120), the Soviet Union did not manage to eliminate guerrilla resistance, and "humiliating withdrawal provided the only way out in 1988" (McMichael, 2002, p. 270). In February 1989, the last Soviet troops were withdrawn. In April 1992, Kabul felt to the *mujahedin*. Ironically, with the cost about 14,000 killed soldiers, and 70,000 wounded in action (Shaw and Spencer, 2003, p. 177), and a price tag of about $3 billion annually (Beckett, 2001, p. 212), the most significant "achievement" of the Soviet Union appeared to be "the loss of the Soviet military's image of invincibility" (Odom, 1998, p. 247). Some scholars even speculate that the lost war in Afghanistan significantly influenced the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

The pattern for the Afghani guerrilla resistance was established, even before the arrival of the Soviets to Afghanistan. Armed revolt throughout the countryside and uprisings in cities had been increasing incrementally as a response to anti-Islam and anti-tribal reforms, implemented by the communist regime, which came to power through a military coup in April 1978 (although it is not clear whether Moscow orchestrated this coup). By the time the Soviets invaded the country, virtually no part of Afghanistan, except the major cities, was securely controlled by the government (Collins, 1986). However, the Soviets' presence inflamed the resistance even more, instead of intimidating insurgents. The invasion provided the common enemy for the fragmented resistance. Shortly after their arrival in the country, the Soviets came under fire from hit-and-run attacks. Soon, impelled by the appeal of the *jihad* (or "holy war against infidels"), foreign Islamic fundamentalists also began infiltrating into Afghanistan to join the resistance.

It is interesting to note that guerrilla warfare against the Soviets, in contrast to the Vietnam War, does not seem to be a strategic decision based on a necessity of fighting against a militarily superior enemy. The Soviets faced very fragmented guerrilla forces, composed of numerous factions divided along political, ethnic, tribal, clan and family lines. Any centralized strategic decision was impossible. Collins (1986) suggests that "the initial *mujahedin* resistance was based on traditional Afghan warfare, with few signs of any methodological approach to the problems of fighting against a modern army." Even the coordination of resistance would have been very difficult, especially in the beginning: "what happened in one province or even part of a province did not often affect events elsewhere" (Asprey, 1994, p. 1206). The *mujahedin* comprised at least seven main resistance groups that came together more formally as the "Islamic Unity of Afghan Mujahedin" only in 1985 (Beckett, 2001, p. 209). This lack, or even absence, of strategic coordination is usually identified as the main weakness of the *mujahedin*. The common opinion is that, if the *mujahedin* had coordinated their actions, they would have been much more militarily effective against the Soviet armed forces. On the other hand, Poole (2004) suggests that the minimum strategic guidance, presumably provided by the Pakistani intelligence service (ISI), was enough for the *mujahedin*, and the tactical successes was due to its lack of organization: "a Soviet agent would have found nothing to infiltrate, no irreplaceable head to cut off" (p. 89).

Although it is not open to speculation how more elaborate strategic coordination may have affected the military performance of the *mujahedin*, the fragmented social structure, as Shaw and Spencer (2003) suggest, made the Afghan *mujahedin* a natural guerrilla fighter on the tactical level: "their social and tribal organization led them to naturally form and operate in small groups" (p. 178). The main tactics of *mujahedin* were hit-and-run operations, with small units of 20 to 50 men, equipped only with light arms and a limited quantity of heavy weapons (Cassidy, 2003, p. 36). "With little firepower, they relied on surprise during both offense and defense" Poole, 2004, p. 98). Close ambushes, long-range sniping, and assault on outposts remained the main types of operations throughout the war. Assassinations, bombings, and sabotage actions were employed in cities, especially in Kabul (Asprey, 1994, p. 1208). Occasionally the *mujahedin* even managed to mount high profile raids in Kabul, such as attacks on the

Soviet embassy and KHAD (secret police) headquarters. The supply operations followed the same pattern – operating in small units. According to Hamizrachi (2003), "even when conducting large-scale weapons smuggling operations from across the Pakistani border they dissected each caravan into small groups of a few donkeys here and a small truck here" (as cited in Shaw and Spencer, 2003, p. 178). Regarding the weaponry and equipment, the *mujahedin* mainly maintained a low-tech, but innovative profile. For example, they reused Soviet mines as improvised explosive devises, or adjusted RPGs (rocket-propelled grenade) to be able to use them as anti-aircraft weapons. However, the successful employment of *Stingers* (i.e., shoulder-fired, anti-aircraft missiles), which were likely provided by the US in 1986, clearly exemplifies that guerrilla warfare is not inconsistent with advanced systems. In general, the guerrillas retained the initiative throughout the war. They refused to fight on the enemy's terms – during the Soviets' large-sweep operations, insurgent forces usually avoided contact and withdrew (McMichael, 2002, p. 264). As Cassidy (2003) suggests, "the *Mujahedin* chose the places and time to attack their enemy… The guerrillas would only fight under favorable conditions, and, when the conditions become unfavorable, like ghosts, the insurgents would disappear in surrounding terrain" (p. 35).

For the present discussion, two aspects of the Soviet-Afghan war are of high importance:

First, the *mujahedin* successfully resisted the invader, and forced him to withdraw his forces, entirely, by using guerrilla warfare (with the possible exception of very sporadic bigger-unit encounters, and mobile defense using cave and tunnel systems). They neither operated in conjunction with conventional forces, nor tried to develop themselves gradually into a regular army to crush the invader's military forces in pitched battles (Joes, 1996, p. 125). In other words, the *mujahedin* guerrillas did not follow the traditional (and most accepted in practice) doctrine that considers guerrilla warfare only as a transitional phase in war – i.e., that finally, the enemy needs to be defeated in an all-out conventional offensive. In contrast to traditional guerrilla doctrine, hit-and-run tactics were an essential way of war of the *mujahedin* throughout the war. The Soviets left Afghanistan not because they needed their armed forces elsewhere, or because the

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guerrillas became strong enough to threaten the Soviets on the battlefield. They left because they were unable to defeat guerrilla resistance and realize their political objectives. In turn, the price of war became too high, and their political capability to continue the war was exhausted.

Second, the Afghanistan war exemplifies the difference between occupying a country and holding it: "while it was relatively easy to seize Afghanistan, it was quite another matter to keep it" (Shaw and Spencer, 2003, p. 177). According to H. J. Poole (2004), over the centuries, Afghans have learned how to repel powerful invaders, not by conventional defense, but by discouraging occupation (p. 88). The Soviets invaded Afghanistan in December 1979 and swiftly seized Kabul, executed Amin, the head of Afghanistan, and installed a puppet regime. Within days, the Soviet military suppressed the resistance of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) Army, controlled key population centers, Afghan army and air bases, and the highway network, and dominated the government. By the end of January 1980, the Soviet forces in Afghanistan numbered 50,000. According to S. McMichael (2002), "by any measure, the Soviet invasion and initial occupation of the country must be considered a resounding success" (p. 262). However, the stabilization of Afghanistan and the elimination of insurgency proved beyond the will and means of the Soviet Union to achieve (McMichael, 2002, p. 262). The easy conventional victory quickly evolved into a protracted guerrilla war. The Soviets invaded with the limited military objectives in mind – provide stability by establishing garrisons in key locations, build up the DRA Army into effective force, and, avoiding fighting themselves, direct and support (with air, artillery, intelligence, and logistic) the DRA Army's operations against insurgents throughout the countryside. However, they overestimated the feasibility of transforming the DRA Army into an effective fighting force (McMichael, 2002, p. 263). On the other hand, the troops of the DRA armed forces were apparently rapidly demoralized, when they found themselves fighting their kinsmen under the command of the invader and its puppet regime (Blank, 1988, p. 62). Untrustworthiness and desertions became a persistent problem (Collins, 1986). Beginning in March 1980, the Soviet troops (Limited Contingent of Soviet Forces in Afghanistan, LCSFA) were compelled to move out of their bases to respond to *mujahedin* incursions. These initial efforts evolved gradually into continuous anti-

guerrilla operations. In turn, the Soviet Union quickly realized that additional troops were required and the LCSFA grew in size to about 110,000-120,000 by the mid-1982, a level that was maintained throughout the rest of the war (McMichael, 2002, p. 264). In addition, the LCSFA were supported by 30,000 troops from the USSR territory (Beckett, 2001, 211). However, even these numbers were not enough to stabilize the country and repress the *mujahedin* resistance, which numbered, according to various sources, about 90,000 (Asprey, 1994, p. 1206), of whom about 20,000 were active at any one time (Collins, 1986). One of the main criticisms of the Soviets' strategy was their reluctance to commit much larger troop strengths to Afghanistan. Seventy-five to ninety percent of Afghan territory was not under the Soviets' control throughout the war (Beckett, 2001, p. 211). After offensive sweeps, the *mujahedin* were able to quickly reestablish their control of objective areas by methodically attacking and driving out any outposts that had been left behind (McMichael, 2002, p. 265). McMichael (2002) suggests that it would have required perhaps about 500,000 troops to stabilize the countryside, and to achieve victory (p. 266). Joes (1996) almost redoubles the number: "to achieve the traditional ten-to-one ratio of troops to guerrillas, the Soviets would have to put ay least 900,000 soldiers into Afghanistan, eight times the size of their actual commitment, and even then there would be no assurance of a speedy solution" (p. 124). Apparently, instead of committing more troops, the Soviets tried to kill, paraphrasing Mao, the "fish" (i.e., guerrillas) by draining the "sea" (i.e., people). In other words, if one distinguishes between two broad approaches to insurgencies – a short-term approach of "great power and effective brutality" or a long-term approach of "patience and cunning" (Bell, 1999, p. 220) – the Soviets apparently concentrated on the former. A strategy of "scorched earth" and "migratory genocide" (e.g., burning crops, slaughtering livestock, destroying agricultural infrastructure, contaminating water, bombing town and villages, dropping anti-personnel mines, and even using poison gasses) was employed on systematic basis in order to deprive the guerrillas of their popular support (food, information, and shelter) by driving off the inhabitants (Asprey, 1994, p. 1207). Although an estimated 4 million refugees had already been generated by 1982 (Beckett, 2001, p. 211), and the agricultural production decreased by 25 percent in 1985 compared with prewar levels (Collins, 1986), it does not appear that such policy had a significant effect on the *mujahedin.* Most probably, the

guerrillas compensated for the deprivation of popular support by increasing numbers of recruits from the alienated population and refugees, and smuggling more supplies from outside, especially via the Pakistani-Afghan border. In brief, the swift, massive, and elegant invasion of the Soviets contrasts sharply with the difficulties that the LCSFA experienced trying to stabilize the country. With the price (committing no more than approximately 120,000 troops) and time that Soviets were prepared to dedicate for victory, they were unable to defeat the guerrilla resistance. Neither did the high level of brutality help, which was employed systematically. Marshal V. Kulikov, the commander-in-chief of the Warsaw Pact forces, admitted early on in the war that while it was possible to win a victory in Afghanistan in military terms, it was another thing to rule it (as cited in Blank, 1988, p. 72).

In sum, the Soviet-Afghan war demonstrates the potential of guerrilla warfare as a weapon against a militarily superior enemy. The *mujahedin* were able to protract the war, thus, making the cost too big for the Soviet Union to persist. The Soviets retreated without realizing their political aims. As well, this war clearly exemplifies the difference between invading and occupying a country, and holding and ruling it. Swift and massive invasion did not assure successful stabilization of the country afterwards. The *mujahedin* repelled Soviets not by successful conventional defense, but by discouraging occupation.

V.   CONCLUSIONS

In this study, unconventional deterrence is defined as persuading the opponent not to attack through using threats of unconventional warfare, such as terrorism and guerrilla resistance. Terrorism is treated primarily as a punishment strategy, where the deterrer threatens to punish the aggressor's population by making retaliatory terrorist strikes, while guerrilla warfare is defined as a denial strategy. By adopting a guerrilla warfare strategy, the deterrer threatens to protract a war, thereby, making it more costly for the aggressor, and to deny, eventually, the aggressor from achieving their political objectives.

Unconventional deterrence, in general, and the possibility of a weaker opponent deterring a stronger one, in particular, are largely unexplored areas in deterrence theory. In fact, because the underlying hypothesis of commonly-held deterrence theory is based on the balance of military capabilities between the deterrer and the aggressor (i.e., weighing the military strengths of one against the other), the weak are virtually precluded from the possibility of deterring a considerably stronger opponent. On the other hand, deterrence theory also argues that deterrence should obtain, all other things being equal, if the aggressor is precluded from achieving a short and decisive victory. Aggressors do not like long wars, because they are costly, and unpredictable. Unfortunately, deterrence theory does not look beyond the common argumentation, that having military capabilities to match the opponent's military muscle is the only way to threaten him with either a prolonged war, or defeat on the battlefield. However, this thesis contends that, by adopting a certain military strategy, an underdog may protract a war, notwithstanding being overwhelmingly mismatched, militarily. Large, strategic capabilities that can withstand a long war, and/or short-term military forces, to repulse an attack, from the very beginning, and defeat the aggressor, militarily, are not the only possibilities in protracting a war, and/or denying the aggressor from achieving his objectives. The US-Vietnamese and the Soviet-Afghan wars suggest that an inferior opponent can protract a war by adopting a low-intensity guerrilla warfare strategy, which, in both cases, counteracted the superior military capabilities of the opponents (i.e., the US in the first, and the Soviets in the second). In turn, the Vietnamese communists and the Afghan *mujahedin* succeeded in denying the superpowers from achieving their political

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objectives. Particularly, the Afghanistan War exemplifies that there is a considerable difference between defending a country conventionally and discouraging an occupation. Therefore, the present study contends that the balance of military capabilities is not an overriding determinant in deterrence. Deterrence theory also needs to consider the opponents' strategies (i.e., weighing military strategies). If an inferior opponent adopts a strategy that makes the aggressor's military superiority irrelevant, to a certain degree, deterrence may hold, notwithstanding an overwhelming imbalance in military capabilities. Hence, strategy is also a determinant in deterrence situations. In unconventional deterrence, especially, the deterrer's strategy is more important than the balance of military capabilities between the opponents.

Small war theories also suggest that underdogs' victories in war are not accidental. Although it is impossible, for obvious reasons, to establish an unambiguous small war dynamics, and identify conditions under which an underdog's victory would be guaranteed in a small war, several insights from these theories support the argument of this thesis. That is, that an underdog may increase the deterrent effect of its military capabilities by concentrating its defensive efforts on unconventional warfare. First, great powers adopt big-war paradigms through sheer necessity (which, in fact, is not the best approach to dealing with guerrilla resistance), because they need to be prepared to counter other "would-be" great powers. Second, counterinsurgency is a difficult task, even under the best of circumstances. Thus, there is no easy and quick answer to countering guerrilla resistance – a weak actor, employing guerrilla resistance, is difficult to defeat. Third, the balance of interests and motivations, usually, favors the weak in small wars. Therefore, the stronger opponent is politically vulnerable in protracted wars. Finally, guerrilla warfare may be an optimal weapon of the weak. Compared with conventional defenses, hit-and-run tactics, the avoidance of pitched battles, operating through a decentralized command, the ability to blend with civilian populations, and a much lower reliance on uninterrupted logistic support, all allow the underdog to counteract a great deal of the superior firepower of the enemy, and to tie down large numbers of the enemy's troops. As well, in a small war, the underdog does not need to defeat the opponent, militarily. All he must do is protract war by not losing, thus

gradually wearing down the opponent's political will in persisting. Hence, these insights suggest that, by adopting guerrilla warfare strategies, underdogs would likely increase the deterrent effect of their military forces, vis-à-vis the superior enemy.

However, this study also concludes that unconventional deterrence, as a strategy, is far more problematic and unreliable, compared with nuclear and conventional deterrence. Unconventional capabilities are neither very impressive, nor clear in their levels of destructiveness. Because of their relatively limited destructiveness, there will always be a high probability that the aggressor will take a risk, or choose to suffer the price. Hence, its low destructiveness is an inherent weakness of unconventional deterrence. To deter the aggressor, via threats of inflicting a precise loss, is far more difficult than through threats of inflicting devastating damage. The low levels of destructiveness of unconventional deterrence suggests that, first, unconventional deterrence will work only when the opponent is cost-sensitive, and second, that unconventional deterrence strategies should be tailored, very precisely, to the vulnerabilities and fears of a specific opponent, its society, and its leadership, in order to produce the deterrent effect.

The present study suggests that the relatively limited destructiveness of unconventional threats can be compensated for, to a certain extent, if an unconventional deterrence strategy can reinforce the opponent's internalized deterrence. An aggressor that has previously manifested difficulties in dealing with unconventional warfare, will more likely be deterred through the use unconventional threats, than an aggressor that has not so manifested. One of the circumstances most favorable to the use of unconventional deterrence occurs when the opponent's previous unfortunate experience in small wars has resulted in it having some internalized fears. The best example of such internalized fears is the US's aversion to small wars as a result of their experience in Vietnam. The existence of the long-term self-deterrent effect, induced by the US's lost war in Vietnam, increases considerably the likelihood that the threats of resistance through guerrilla warfare will produce the desired deterrent effect. The presence of such a threat may have made it more difficult for the U.S. to invade Iraq in 2003. On the other hand, the difficulties in defeating the ongoing insurgency, and stabilizing Iraq, may increase, even more, the US's sensitivity to low-intensity, guerrilla wars. Concerning punishment

strategies by retaliatory terrorist attacks, unconventional deterrence appears to work better if the aggressor had a painful experience in dealing with terrorism on a previous occasion. Thus, if internalized deterrence exists in an opponent's strategic culture, unconventional deterrence strategies would be much more feasible and credible.

Notwithstanding the above-mentioned unreliability of unconventional deterrence, this study concludes that, concentrating defense efforts on guerrilla resistance can increase the deterrent effects of the underdog's military capabilities, vis-à-vis a superior enemy. If the aggressor is able, literally, to overrun the deterrer's military forces on the battlefield, conventional deterrence is not feasible. On the other hand, by resisting unconventionally, the weak state has, at least, a possibility to succeed in protracting a conflict, and denying the great power from acquiring his political objectives. When the imbalance in capabilities is overwhelming, deterrence is most likely to succeed when the weak state adopts a strategy that does not play to the strengths of the enemy. While the Soviets-Afghan war suggests that the aggressor can be repulsed entirely through guerrilla warfare, the conventional phases of the Vietnam War suggest that military defeat is an inevitable outcome when the weak state tries to fight the strong in a conventional war of pitched battles. Overall, the only type of conflicts in which great powers have lost against underdogs has been guerrilla wars.

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